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THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DONNA ISABEL

BY RANDALL PARRISH

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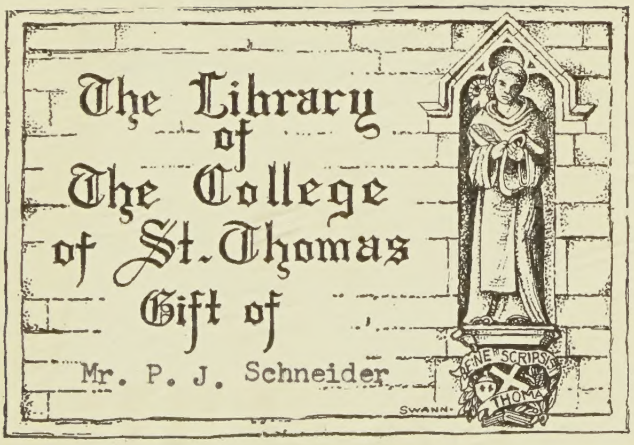

THE LAST VOYAGE

OF THE

DONNA ISABEL

By MR. PARRISH

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"'I should rather be here, facing death with you, than anywhere alone,' she exclaimed swiftly."—Page 274.

THE LAST VOYAGE

OF THE

DONNA ISABEL

A Romance of the Sea

BY

RANDALL PARRISH

AUTHOR OF "WHEN WILDERNESS WAS KING"
"PRISONERS OF CHANCE," ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED IN FULL COLOR BY

ALLEN T. TRUE

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1908

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"I should rather be here, facing death with you, than anywhere alone," she exclaimed swiftly . . *Frontispiece*

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THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE DONNA ISABEL

A ROMANCE OF THE SEA

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH BEGINS ADVENTURE

SOME may question the truth of this narrative, yet they will scarcely be found among those who "go down to the sea in ships." To them the unfathomable mystery abiding upon the face of the great deep, the constant marvel of huge, heaving leagues of watery solitude, secret and profound, must ever remain so vast, so inexplicable, as to be beyond any interrogatory of the finite — the strange, the unexpected, lurking everywhere. To others, mere landsmen, confidently imagining that all phenomena can be reduced within the contracted limits of human comprehension, I need say no more than that witnesses still survive to corroborate the principal incidents of this story, which I now purpose writing in the full glow of a memory still dominated by the events to be recorded.

It had come to be the fifth day of April, the year 1879. I, John Stephens, aged twenty-four, occupied a rather comfortable seat upon the shaded balcony of that

large, ultra-fashionable hotel at Valparaiso, which, as travellers will recall, clings to the steep hillside overlooking both the city and harbor beneath. I was alone, not having as yet ordered the serving of the evening meal, the small wicker stand at my elbow holding merely the light wine which I had been sipping as a stimulant to thought, while industriously puffing at a black cigarro for a purpose not altogether dissimilar.

In truth I was gravely troubled, and from sufficient cause. Nor had an entire afternoon devoted to diligent reflection revealed any possible escape from the peculiar difficulties of my situation. I watched the red sun slowly disappear into the dark loneliness of the western sea, and saw the earlier night shadows softly descend in vapory folds of mist over the white-walled city and crowded roadstead beyond, hardly observing the rare panoramic beauty of ever varying colors, so intensely absorbed had I become in contemplation of my own requirements.

A gayly attired military band was playing noisily in a near-by plaza, and through the intervening distance I was able to distinguish plainly the patriotic notes of national music. I even believed that a medley of shouting voices, mingled with an echo of cheers, was borne to me on the rising night wind, and I leaned above the low railing to gaze down, slightly interested, as a regiment of Chilean Infantry — regulars of the line, from their white trousers and stiff hats — swept swiftly past the hotel corner in rapid time, to disappear suddenly over the steep crest in the direction of the quay. Far away, toward the right, where the long row of gray-stone barracks was still dimly

visible against the darker background of surrounding hills, was to be discerned a glimmer of steel, as squadrons of cavalry and artillery engaged in dress parade, their numerous banners flapping against the sky. At the moment these several occurrences served to awaken the merest interest, tending rather to bring home to memory a freshening knowledge of the desperation of my situation.

It can all be told in few words: I was *persona non grata* to the Chilean authorities, with apparently every possible avenue leading forth from the country fully and effectively barred. While personally unknown to those officials most interested in apprehending me, and, consequently, thus far successful in masking my movements under the guise of a foreign gentleman of leisure temporarily resident at a fashionable hotel, I nevertheless discovered it impossible to break through the cordon of watchful government spies, and shake the Chilean dust from off my feet. A rapid explanation will suffice. A native of Massachusetts, of excellent family connections, together with prospects of future wealth, I early developed the unrestrainable propensities of a rover, and after a vain effort to turn my reluctant ambition toward one of the learned professions my parents, despairing of ever doing better, finally consented to apprentice me to the sea. Unfortunately for the realization of their more secret hopes, I took to that hard, adventurous life as a duck to water, so that, at the end of five years' service, I had risen, through the various grades, to the honorable position of first officer in the old Leyland Line, my steamship being the *Vulcan*, trading between New York and South American ports.

Soon after I attained this berth my father died suddenly, leaving behind him a fair amount of property, a goodly share of which came to me in cash. It chanced that, during a previous voyage, a passenger on board had succeeded in interesting me deeply in certain mining operations which he was conducting under a Bolivian concession. Finding myself in possession of abundant means, and experiencing that occasional disgust for sea life common to all sailor-men, I embarked with boyish enthusiasm in this new enterprise, not only investing a considerable amount of money, but likewise giving the company my personal services as assistant superintendent.

Beyond doubt our concession was an extremely valuable one, but, as we were soon destined to discover, it came to us with an unfortunate flaw in the title, there developing a spirited controversy between the constituted authorities of Bolivia and Chile, over which country the territory involved belonged. From harsh words in public, and the private exchange of diplomatic notes, the argument rapidly advanced to blows, and was finally referred to the arbitrament of the rifle. As our financial interests were entirely Bolivian, and our invested money at stake, it was no more than natural that we should openly ally ourselves with that struggling faction which the Chilean authorities promptly denounced as *insurrectos*, and proceeded to crush.

It was something of a comic-opera war, resulting in two or three skirmishes wherein ill-equipped and poorly officered *paisanos* were pitted against regular troops of the line, and, as we received from Bolivia no more substantial aid than vague promises, our resistance, though

rather stubborn, was soon overcome. When the final wild stampede for safety came, I discovered myself, as quartermaster-general of the late revolutionary forces, still in possession of a considerable sum of money, to which no one else possessed any better claim, the unhealed scar of a Chilean bullet in my shoulder, and an exceedingly flattering chance of being summarily shot by drum-head court-martial if caught. All opportunity for retreat across the Bolivian frontier was already effectively blocked, but, after several weeks of excessive hardship, skulking amid the dark recesses of Indian huts in the mountains, I succeeded in stealing unobserved into Valparaiso, feeling confident that, as a sailor, I should be able to discover in that busy seaport some early opportunity for escape.

This confidence was doomed to bitter disappointment. The Chilean authorities were especially desirous of apprehending me, inspired doubtless by visions of the war-chest, rumored to be of far greater value than truth could justify. They were both alert and suspicious. Working secretly, aided by the few friends in whom I could repose trust, I became fully cognizant of my precarious situation, and deeply impressed with the knowledge that, at best, I was doomed to remain in hiding for an indefinite period. The American Consul was obdurate to pleading, refusing peremptorily to become involved in the affair, while no war-vessel floating the flag of the United States, to which I might flee for protection, entered the harbor. Manifestly it was impossible for me to depart on any foreign vessel as a passenger without possessing the necessary papers properly

viséd, nor could I even ship as seaman before the mast without running the gantlet of numerous suspicious officials especially warned to apprehend me.

In brief, though possessing ample means, I was a helpless prisoner, my only safety the keeping out of sight from all in authority within the narrow confines of the hotel. Even there I was liable to betrayal at any moment, venturing forth only at night for a short stroll, suspicious of every approaching stranger. It was as awkward a predicament as any man could ever possibly drift into; whichever way I leaped it would probably be out of the frying-pan into the fire. I was almost literally between the devil and the deep sea.

Sitting there in solitude that evening I thought it out all over again for the hundredth time, bitterly cursing myself for a stupid fool, yet utterly unable to discover any venturesome prospect of ultimate escape. I was trapped as securely as though the hand of actual arrest was about to be placed upon my shoulder. I might, by thus continuing to skulk in the dark, delay the result, yet the final ending was inevitable. Even casting aside the possibility of all intelligent search, some blunder was certain, sooner or later, to reveal my identity to the government, and then my shrift would assuredly be a short one. South American justice is not customarily tempered with mercy, nor lengthened by technicalities; nor could I perceive any vision of a patriotic consul waving above me the protecting folds of the old flag. Beyond doubt I was cornered, and the time was ripe for the eager acceptance of any reckless opportunity. Yet, desperate as I was, I could perceive none; everywhere arose the

same blank wall of Chilean power, impassable, unassailable, insurmountable. Saint Andrew! mine was a situation to chill the blood.

The stars began to gleam in the black void of sky overhead, those brilliant, scintillating stars of the South in their unfamiliar constellations, forever reminding me that I was an alien and a stranger. Far beneath, the myriad lights of the city glowed in varied tints of color, spreading constantly forth into wider radius as the busy lamplighters travelled their nightly rounds. I could trace thus the irregular curving shores of the open roadstead, and soon the green, red, and yellow lamps of the various vessels riding at anchor became visible, oftentimes beautifully reflected across the illuminated water, as it sparkled under the multicolored lights. It was like a glimpse of fairyland, a prospect which never failed to impress my imagination; even then, troubled as my mind was, my fascinated eyes traced with new appreciation those softly blended tints, that constantly changing radiance of color. The city itself, wrapped within the deepening folds of this early night mantle, appeared unusually noisy and demonstrative. I dimly wondered at it. There was a ceaseless blare of bands, a medley of inarticulate cries, mingled with the continuous disorder of shuffling feet along the roughly paved streets. I could distinguish nothing definite as I hung curiously over the balcony rail, staring idly down, yet it was plainly evident that the entire population was astir with some increasing excitement. Far out toward the distant mouth of the harbor a fortress battery was firing salvos of artillery, the swift flames of discharge cleaving the black shadows in vicious spurts of yellowish

red, the sullen reverberations of sound shaking the hotel casements. Some Holy Saint's Day, I imagined, wondering idly what special devotion of the Church could be responsible for so much of uproar, so general an outpouring of enthusiasm. Still, the thought held me barely for a moment; my own personal affairs were far too serious and insistent for any wasted attention upon the saints.

I turned back from the rail, and glanced carelessly within. The great dining-hall was already brilliantly illuminated, and a number of the tables were surrounded by guests. It formed a cosmopolitan scene, the grouped faces being representative of a wide variety of races, the scraps of conversation which floated to me through the open window revealing half the languages of Europe. Swarthy Spaniards, volatile Frenchmen, silent sons of Albion, talkative Yankees, bewhiskered and bespectacled Germans, blond, rosy-cheeked Swedes, together with representatives from half a dozen South American countries, were indiscriminately mingled in sudden brotherhood. This motley, interesting company was composed principally of men, exhibiting here and there the glitter of military uniforms, or some peculiarity of attire attesting the presence of the inevitable globe-trotter, although the majority were plainly enough commercial gentlemen, interested in various lines of trade, and drawn into this vortex from the four corners of the globe in the wild scramble after gold. Few among them were sufficiently interesting to merit a second glance, and my scrutiny of their faces under the glare of light was only a casual one. No foreign passenger steamer had entered the harbor within the past twenty-four hours, and I had already

studied those faces before in the vague, shadowy hope of discovering a friend. I lit another cigarro, out of sheer nervousness, and sat silently watching a Chinese attendant lighting the colored lanterns suspended along the balcony roof. A sudden rocket went swifting and sizzling up from out the centre of the great plaza below, and my eyes followed its swift flight into the black sky until it burst into a thousand miniature stars.

When I turned once again, now half inclined to beckon a waiter and order the serving of dinner, a newly arrived company of guests had taken possession of the small round table just within the open window. I observed the people composing it with quickly aroused curiosity. Three were in the party, apparently father, mother, and daughter, beyond question of high social class. Paterfamilias, sitting in stately dignity at what might be considered the head of the board, a broad napkin spread across his right knee, was typically aristocratic, of spare figure, stern lean face, with iron-gray hair, and moustaches trimmed to perfect point, his eyes, cold and emotionless, gleaming like steel points behind gold-rimmed glasses,—a man certainly over sixty, possessing to the extreme that irritating hauteur possible only to an Englishman of recognized family and position. The lady occupying the seat opposite him, whom I naturally presumed to be his wife, was fleshy enough to own an ample double chin, which drooped to a vaster expanse below; most expensively gowned, her fingers laden with diamonds, and a lorgnette at her eye, through which she deliberately surveyed the assembled company. Her evident attempt at duplicating the calm *haut-ton* of her

emotionless companion was nevertheless somewhat of a counterfeit, as it failed to conceal wholly a slight twinkle of amusement curving the corners of her mouth, and a certain slight vulgar uneasiness of manner. His ideal was evidently that of a marble statue, cold, immaculate, his slightest movement revealing the frigidity of one born to the purple, while my lady retained some semblance to flesh and blood, although well veneered by long social artifice. He was nature, while she had evidently been developed by skill; yet the matron, to my thinking, proved far the more interesting specimen of the two.

I must confess, however, wasting precious little attention upon either, for my eyes early rested upon the younger woman seated between the two, and hence directly confronting me. I will not say I never saw a fairer picture of womanhood just when the lovely flower becomes a blossom fully blown, yet assuredly none other ever possessed for me the same indefinable fascination, the same ineffable charm. Twenty-two, possibly, although her age was difficult to guess, with oval face and clear, fresh skin, the rich, red blood of perfect health crimsoning the rounded cheeks; eyes of deepest, darkest gray, the kind of eyes pledging a thoughtful soul behind to yield them such rare power of expression; a face reflecting the joy of living, yet responsive, and, in moments of quietness, saddened beyond its years; an entrancing dimple visible in the rather broad chin; the lips moist and rosy with health, sufficiently parted to reveal a tantalizing glimpse of white, regular teeth behind; the forehead low and broad, the wealth of shadowing

hair of darkest brown, yet with an odd gleam of reddish gold causing the gathered masses to seem an aureole of beauty. But it was not the outward face alone, nor any combination of pleasing features, which yielded such rare and indescribable charm — it was rather a distinct and unusual personality which gave to these both life and attractiveness. Her slightest glance or movement, natural and unaffected, seemed a new revelation of self, the outer expression of a secret inward life which I instinctively longed to penetrate, the guarded mystery of which was invitation. There are those rare natures in the world — well it is they are so few — whose slightest smile is as an awakening of the soul, whose uplifted eyes convey more of inspiration than human lips can utter. Of this marvellous company was that young woman now silently sitting beneath the glare of the lamps, her expressive face occasionally uplifted, as though she dimly perceived my near presence amid the shadows without.

The three conversed little, speaking English with that lack of restraint common to those who have been accustomed to having discreet servants behind their chairs, the man grumbling icily over the quality of food furnished and the indifferent service, my lady commenting with audible distinctness on the personal appearance of the various people present, the girl contenting herself with an occasional monosyllable when directly addressed. I despatched my own order, and, while idly waiting the return of the servant, had my attention attracted toward a group gathered about a second table just beyond the one occupied by the English family party.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH I MEET HIS LORDSHIP

CHILEAN officers, largely naval, to judge from their rather resplendent uniforms, occupied this second table, and it was clearly evident that they had been drinking to excess. It was their loud voices and boisterous laughter which first attracted my attention, and I soon caught sufficient of their incautious speech to discover they were bantering one among their number to carry into execution a tipsy boast he had just made over the wine. The special officer thus singled out as butt for the boisterous wit of his reckless companions was a naval lieutenant, a rather tall, cadaverous fellow, sallow faced, his short black hair standing erect and bristling, his moustaches drooping so as to shade the corners of his mouth. His cheeks were flushed with temper from the rough sallies at his expense, and his lips uttered a burning Castilian curse, as he arose somewhat unsteadily to his feet, and glared about into the expectant faces of his laughing tormentors.

"*Sacro Cristo!* you will see, *camaradas;* you will see!" he declared, bracing himself for the effort. "*Caramba!* what sailor fears in presence of beauty? — *puf!* not I."

He turned short about, his sword chains rattling, and strode directly across toward the unconscious Briton, who

stared up at him over his roast beef in petrified astonishment. Fumbling awkwardly at his belt, the intruding officer finally brought forth a card, and placed it ostentatiously upon the table, bowing low as he did so.

"I would myself to introduce to the señor," he announced with drunken gravity, and in amazingly broken English. "I Teniente-Lootenant Sanchez, Chilean Navy; one of the fir-rst family in this country. Maybe you know me, hey? I was with de *Almirante Cochrane*, when the *Capitano* call on you in the leetle ship. Now I would the bettar-r acq'aintance make with the gr-reat Ingles, an' the ladies, the most boot'ful ladies," and his sunken eyes rested gloatingly on the surprised face of the girl, who had half turned, the better to observe him.

It was all so swiftly, so impudently done that the astounded Briton could only stare, his lean face reddening with annoyance. This hesitancy, as well as something in the constrained attitude of the younger woman, seemed to encourage Sanchez: his expression changed to a satisfied smile, while his lank figure bent in another ceremonious bow, this time directed toward her.

"Ah, I knew it vould so be," he said insinuatingly. "It vas so I told it to my *bravas camaradas*. *Si, si*, it vas so ever — the uniform make us welcome vith the ladies. They lofe the brav'; is it not so, señorita?"

By this time the outraged paterfamilias had stiffened into rock, his eyes cold and hard behind their glasses. In frigid contempt he deliberately turned his back upon the fellow, saying icily:

"You impertinent scoundrel! I am accustomed to

selecting my own guests, and you are certainly not one of them."

The Chilean laughed, perhaps not wholly comprehending the words, and remained twisting his moustache between long white fingers. He was far too drunk for fear, besides being upheld by a military contempt for civilians.

"Pah! 't is a pig of a papa," he sputtered, half turning to witness the approval of his laughing companions behind. "But the smile of beauty still invites, and Juan Sanchez fears not before man or devil."

He strode around the table, his scabbard clanking on the stone floor, drew out the single vacant chair, and planted himself in it, his back toward me, his impudent face leering across the white cloth toward the startled, indignant woman seated opposite. I watched her gray eyes widen from astonishment, only to darken with indignation. She pushed back her chair, half rose to her feet, and sank down again, her cheeks flushed, her bosom rising and falling tumultuously. Her evident contempt for the fellow would have utterly crushed any one less befuddled into embarrassed silence. But Sanchez merely grinned, his hands still toying with his moustache.

"*Sangre de Cristo*, was it not so, Mees?" he questioned insinuatingly, utterly ignoring the helpless man sputtering at the head of the table, who could only glare at him with open mouth. "The uniform of valor is the best introduction to the favor of the ladies. *Si*, you vera soon be pretty good *amiga* of me, the Lootenant Juan Sanchez. I show you the vera best society in Valparaiso, the opera, the grand ball, everything that pleases the señoritas in my country. I have the *entrée*, an' it is easy. I

take you to the dance on the war-ship — *bueno!* all vera fine. *Si*, was it not so, Mees?"

The young girl, her fine eyes contemptuous and loathing, turned aside from the leering, drunken face confronting her. An instant only her glance rested on the sputtering old man at the head of the table, then swept, almost beseechingly, about the great room. Apparently no one present had taken slightest interest in the affair, with the exception of the small party of Chilean officers who were laughing uproariously over their wine, and the girl's gray eyes, now almost black from excitement, came back to her persecutor.

"The dance on the war-ship, señorita," he insisted, "the gran' dance of my country; it will please you *mucho. Dios!* w'at care we for papa?"

She perceived me plainly now, leaning forward just outside the window directly behind the fellow's back. I know not what message of encouragement she may have read in my face, but into her eyes there instantly swept a mute, passionate appeal. For the fraction of a moment I hesitated, feeling convinced that any action on my part would only serve to hasten my own fate. Yet it was not in my nature to hold back. Half rising, and bending forward, I reached through the opened window, twisted my fingers into the fellow's coat collar, and the next instant he was lying flat upon his back on the balcony floor, nothing remaining to show his recent presence in the dining-hall except an overturned chair.

It was rather smartly, prettily done, the astounded Lieutenant possessing neither wind nor opportunity for the slightest outcry, and, once without, I promptly

throttled him, meanwhile muttering a few important admonitions into his ear in well selected Spanish.

"Lie still there, you drunken idiot. Make another attempt to bite me, and I'll pound your head on these stones. Bah! save your threats, señor, and if you make the slightest uproar I'll hoist you over the railing yonder, and it's thirty feet to the pavement below. Now stand up! Do you see this, señor?" and I pressed the cold muzzle of a revolver against his swarthy cheek. "Oh, you do! Well, you probably know also how it works. Now listen to me — there are stairs at that corner yonder; you go down them quietly, and disappear — disappear; do you understand that? If you dare return to that dining-room to-night, or attempt again to address that young woman, I am going to kill you, señor."

My voice was cold and low, but it carried weight. Panting still from the fierce choking, his eyes hot with anger, his lips trembling, he endeavored to speak.

"*Nombre de Dios!*" he burst forth at last, his face full of murder, yet standing helpless before my gun-barrel. "I cut your heart out! You insult me, a Chilean sailor. I have revenge for my honor. You fight me for this, señor."

"Oh, certainly, anything to oblige," I returned indifferently. "Only you get out of here now, and sober up, Sanchez."

"*Caramba!* you know my name, señor; but I know not yours."

I drew a card from my pocket across which had been written the cognomen I had assumed at the hotel.

"You possess it now," I said somewhat tartly.

"Besides, señor, that happens to be my dinner coming yonder, and I prefer eating it undisturbed. You either go down those stairs quietly at once, or I 'll kick you down."

I was obliged to smile while watching him back away. Beyond question the fellow was an arrant coward and bully, yet sufficiently angry and outraged to have fought gladly, if only opportunity served. I followed him to the head of the stairs, watching him closely while he descended, cursing fiercely to himself at every step until he finally vanished into the blackness below. The chances were strong that I should hear from him later, but in the meantime my interest veered to the excellent dinner being served. The Lieutenant would have his turn, and, perchance, bring me swift release from all my troubles on the morrow.

The English party still remained at their table, lingering over the dessert, but I noticed that conversation had lapsed, and precious little eating was being done. Evidently only the requirements of good form held them to their places, the elderly gentleman especially denoting his nervousness by continual side-glances about the long room. I overheard him mutter something indistinctly regarding having left his pistol upstairs, and it was plainly apparent he felt thoroughly ashamed of his late passiveness under insult. Madame was flushed and uneasy, angry still over the episode, and greatly inclined to sputter now that all real danger had disappeared; but the younger woman merely toyed with her spoon in silence, her eyes downcast, her cheeks devoid of their previous color. She made a fair picture, the brilliant light overhead flooding her dark hair, and it was not

in young human nature to refrain from gazing at her through the invitingly open window. Finally they all pushed back their chairs to retire, and, as she glanced up while rising to her feet, our eyes met fairly, and a warm wave of color swept across the uplifted, sensitive face. The next instant, yielding apparently to some sudden impulse of gratitude, she stepped through the open window, and stood beside me with extended hand.

"Señor," she said, speaking a broken Spanish very prettily, "it was extremely kind of you to assist in removing that horrible man, and I cannot leave without some expression of my gratitude."

I was upon my feet instantly, bowing before her as to a queen, yet feeling a strange embarrassment.

"That incident was nothing, señorita," I insisted, yet venturing to look directly into the depths of those dark gray eyes, so intensely studying my face under the dim light of the lanterns. "I did no more than any man would consider a privilege. I realized you had no younger protector at hand."

She glanced around toward the others of her party, now also upon their feet, and gazing out at us in undisguised amazement.

"No," she explained, as though in unwilling apology; "he has passed the age where he can safely measure strength with ruffianism. It is not lack of courage, señor, but of bodily vigor."

"A time of life which must come to all of us," I returned hastily, "and prudence is not necessarily disgrace. Yet believe me, señorita, I already feel amply repaid for my little part in this comedy of errors by your

smile of recognition and words of thanks. You are English?"

Her eyes fell slightly, the long lashes clearly outlined against the white flesh.

"Yes, señor," she replied softly, "we are English travellers for pleasure. Our yacht lies anchored in the harbor below."

I imagined she was tempted to inquire who I might be, but, while she stood hesitating, uncertain of the propriety of so personal a question, the spare, stiff figure of the Englishman appeared suddenly in the open casement. For a moment of silence his cold eyes surveyed us both with manifest disapproval.

"Doris," he spoke at last, his words cold and stern, "it would have been proper to permit me to express our natural gratitude to this young gentleman."

She drew aside quietly, making no response, and he stood directly facing me, bowing slightly with a stateliness of manner scarcely courteous, his language immediately changing to Spanish, doubtless assuming that to be my native tongue.

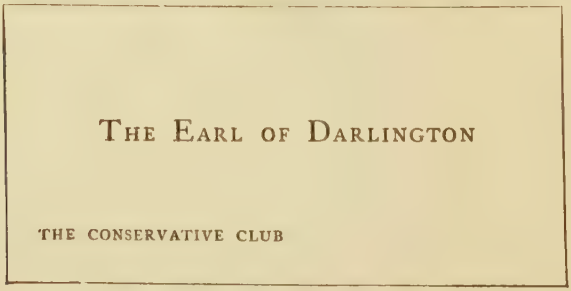
"The gallant action of the señor was greatly appreciated by all of us," he began formally; "the more so because I was so astounded by the fellow's unparalleled impudence as to be, for the moment, helpless to resist insult. I trust the señor has not suffered during the encounter?"

"Not in the slightest."

"That is most gratifying," the calm stateliness of his features slightly relieved by the flicker of a smile, as he drew forth a gold-mounted case, and extended toward me

an engraved card. "Permit me, señor; and we shall feel greatly honored to receive you at any time on board our yacht in the harbor. The length of our stay at this post is uncertain, yet we shall surely remain for several days. And let me add," he concluded, drawing himself up with an air that compelled my admiration, "that I hold myself personally answerable for any consequences which may follow upon your timely interference. I shall so inform him by a special letter immediately."

I bowed, giving utterance to a word or two of formal thanks, believing I read a far more cordial invitation in the depths of the suddenly uplifted gray eyes behind his shoulder. But he yielded her no further opportunity for expression, and I remained there alone, watching them move slowly across the brightly illumined dining-room, instantly the cynosure of all eyes at the numerous tables, my heart pulsing to a new emotion as she turned swiftly, beneath the half concealing shadow of the portieres, and cast one quick, sweeping glance backward. "Doris" — the name lingered softly pleasant upon my lips in memory, seeming to bring before me the haunting vision of her face. I held the card up to the light, and read:



CHAPTER III

IN WHICH OPPORTUNITY COMES

A PERIOD of decided depression followed, the earlier vision of youth fading swiftly as I realized what the message of this card plainly meant, and contemplated the social gulf yawning between myself and this woman of the English aristocracy. Dreams are exceedingly pleasant companions when aroused by bright eyes and rosy lips, but there are bounds even the imaginings of youth can hardly overstep, and this was such an one. No doubt from her secure pedestal of birth and rank she could easily afford to smile down in simulated equality upon me as a rather pleasant young fellow who had been of service; yet it would be well for me not to take such smiles too seriously, or to become entangled in a mesh from which there was no escape. A cat may look at a king, and a South American adventurer might venture to gaze admiringly upon this beautiful gentlewoman, yet vaulting ambition should have a care lest it o'erleap itself. Oh, well, it was not much I had to overcome — merely an impression, a fugitive admiration which would early perish, for it was hardly probable we should ever meet again, in spite of his lordship's stiff invitation, and her exceedingly warm glance secretly seconding it.

I smiled grimly at thought of so insane a dream of love at such a time and place. Man's nature comprises

a strange intellectual mechanism, continually planning and hoping even amid situations of the most desperate peril. Here was I, alone, unable to change my environment, every movement bringing new danger, almost certain of early detection, the result imprisonment or death; yet turning aside to quarrel with one only too glad to denounce me should he discover the truth, and totally forgetting every caution in sudden admiration for a girl never seen before, probably never to be seen again. But a smile can leave a deeper wound than a sword, and my mind would recur, in spite of other intervening thoughts, to the pleasant mystery behind her gracious words and action. I was thus lingering over the nuts and wine, dreaming a fool's dream, and idly wondering at the cause of that endless racket in the streets below, with the chorus of *vivas* arising from the crowded plaza, when the open window facing my table became suddenly darkened by a burly figure. Before I could push back my chair, the unwelcome intruder on my privacy was politely bowing before me, one hand pressed upon his heart.

"Pardon, señor, my so abrupt appearance," — and I gazed curiously into a round, bronzed face, guarded by closely clipped side-whiskers, and illumined by steady black eyes, — "but the waiter said I should certainly find you alone here, and my need was most urgent. I address the Señor West?"

It was the name I had assumed, and, with closely pressed lips, I bowed in silent acknowledgment of my identity, feeling little doubt about the man's mission. The round, rather complacent face broke into a genial smile of relief.

"Most fortunate I am thus to discover you with such facility," he continued fluently, using both hands in gesticulation. "Señor, it is now a great favor I would ask. Could you yield me the honor of a private interview in my own room?" pointing upward impressively. "It is upon the floor above."

"If your mission is in regard to the Sanchez affair, señor," I returned somewhat coldly, "privacy is hardly necessary. The preliminary details can all be arranged here."

He gazed at me in surprise, rubbing his hands together swiftly.

"The Sanchez affair! I know not as to that, señor. This matter on which I come is most delicate, most secret; it is not for other ears. 'T is because of what I would communicate that I seek private audience."

I remained motionless, looking straight at him, my teeth clenched on my cigar, my mind busy with expedients. If his call had nothing whatever to do with my quarrel with Sanchez, it must be an arrest. Yet why was the fellow so mysterious? What did he require of me in private audience? Ah! a bribe probably — he desired to learn first what amount I would give for an opportunity to escape. I arose to my feet, the whole affair settled within my own mind, and cool enough to take advantage of every opening thus presented.

"Very well, señor; lead the way and I will follow."

"*Bueno!*" He laid one hand upon my shoulder, his eyes darkening with delight. "You have the courage, señor, the audacity of the brave soul. 'T is in the face, the eye, and gives me hope of my mission already. We

will go by the outside stairway, so as to be unobserved by those within."

I followed him silently up the steep iron steps and along the narrow, dimly lighted hall. He paused finally, unlocking a door, and stood politely aside while I entered. A moment he lingered outside, peering suspiciously up and down the deserted hallway, and stepping within, closed and bolted the door, even carefully lowering the transom before turning up the gas lights. He hastily crossed the room, shut down the single window, and drew closer the heavy shade. I watched these evidences of excessive caution with considerable amusement — undoubtedly bribery of the Valparaiso secret police was considered a most serious affair. A table occupied the centre of the room, and with a wave of his rather fat hand my mysterious companion invited me to occupy a chair beside it. A moment he remained standing opposite, regarding me in apparent hesitation. The perplexity exhibited by his troubled face caused me to smile again.

"So, señor, to you it was all fun," he said gravely, gesticulating with vigor. "But I appreciate the danger, the peril of discovery. Everywhere lurk the spies, and what I have to say is not for other ears. Señor, I have addressed you as the Señor West, for so I was bidden; but the man I really seek is not in truth of any such name," his voice sinking to the merest whisper, as he leaned impressively toward me across the table. "It is Señor Estevan."

I crossed my legs in apparently careless indifference, my fingers resting on the butt of the revolver in my

pocket, undecided yet whether this was to be war or peace, but prepared for a bold play in either case. The fellow evidently knew me sufficiently well, so that any denial would be useless.

"I am Jack Stephens; so you may proceed, señor."

"Ah! 'T is as I was told!" his face brightening instantly, his hands delving within an inside pocket of his coat. "This card — see; it is written in the English — it will tell you if I be trusted, if I be all right. You know the handwriting, señor? the man who wrote it?"

I accepted the bit of pasteboard curiously. It was the business card of a well-known sugar firm, and I ran my eyes hastily over the few lines dimly traced on the back, "*Bearer is all he represents himself to be; you may do business with him safely — G. P. L.*" I glanced upward at the anxious face of the man opposite; he was evidently tingling with excitement.

"You know him, señor? You know the handwriting? You believe him? What is it he says? I read not the English."

"Yes; we are acquainted. He is George Loring, a friend of mine. He says you are what you represent yourself to be, and that I may transact business with you in perfect safety. Now then, what are you — an agent of the police?"

He shrugged his broad shoulders, spreading his hands deprecatingly.

"No, no; *Cielo*, no! Does he not tell you my name?"

I shook my head negatively, my interest already deeply increased.

"No! He was most cautious. It was best so; but now I tell you, and you believe." Again he leaned forward, his voice sinking to a mere whisper. "I am Don Emilio de Castillo."

My face must have expressed no familiarity with the name, for he sprang briskly to his feet, shaking a fat, official-looking envelope before my eyes.

"What! you recognize it not? *Caramba!* then I shall show you, señor. You read Spanish, *si?* This will tell why I speak with the authority of my Nation. See — I am Admiral of the Peruvian Navy. I have the power, the right, the authority to say what I now speak to you. You believe that, señor?"

"Yes," I replied soberly, by now fully awakened to the fact that this was to be no ordinary meeting. "I believe all you say; more, now I remember your name, Don Emilio; but what are you doing here? What is it you desire of me?"

A large military band went tramping by along the paved street below, the musicians playing lustily, vociferous *vivas* greeting each step of their advance. My companion waited until the noise had partially ceased, his lips parted, his cheeks flushed.

"You know not! You know not what all this means?" he questioned, pointing with trembling finger toward the window. Before I could answer he burst forth vehemently: "It is war, señor; war, disgracefully declared this very day between Chile and my country — the pigs! the cowards! the bullies!" He sprang to his feet as if crazed with sudden excitement, and began pacing the room, waving his hands with wild gesticulations.

"They think to fright us, señor, but they will learn a lesson. We will fight, señor; fight to the knife. It will not be *vivas* they will shout — these Chilean dogs — when the Peruvians come to their country. Then they will be begging on their knees for mercy. *Sangre de Cristo!* but we will show them what war means!"

I watched him earnestly, already beginning dimly to perceive in all this a possible opening for my own escape.

"War?" I repeated. "And declared to-day? It has come suddenly, although I am aware there have been months of controversy. Did Peru expect such a result? Is she prepared?"

He paused in his nervous walk, his hands outspread on the table, his dark eyes glowing into mine.

"Both yes and no, señor. We knew well that nothing save war could ever wipe out the Chilean insults to our country. Yet we hoped for more time in which to prepare. *Cielo!* it is not lack of men — no! no! the army is strong, valiant, señor; it will fight to the death. But the navy! *Dios de Dios!* we have not the ships, señor. They come not yet, those we have bought in Europe. 'T is that which has brought me here in disguise to Valparaiso; 't is that which brings me now to you."

I watched him closely without venturing response, and he sank into a chair, his elbows on the table.

"*Si*, now I explain it all to you," his voice falling so low I could scarcely follow. "We know for two weeks past war was to come. We have only a few war-ships, one, two, three: not enough to fight the navy of Chile, or even guard our own coast. We have the men sufficient,

but not the ships, señor. What could I do? I, the Admiral? There was but one hope — the audacity of surprise. They must be taken from the enemy; we must strike the first blow, and at the very heart of the Chilean Navy. I come here incognito; I come before war has been declared; I study and observe. To a brave man chances for action come, señor, and so I found what I sought. You know about the *Esmeralda*, señor?"

I sat up suddenly in my chair, gripping my cigar between my teeth.

"The *Esmeralda!* You mean that steam-yacht the Chilean government purchased from Brazil?"

"*Si*," his eyes glowing eagerly; "you are a sailor, and so would know of her. She is beautiful, strong, swift, a most dangerous vessel if well handled. Have you ever seen her, señor?"

"Only through field-glasses from the balcony of the hotel. She rode at anchor well off the government mole in the roadstead the last I remember."

He clasped his fingers on my arm, leaning eagerly forward until his face was pressed close to mine.

"She lies there yet, señor, but only for to-night — *Dios de Dios!* only for to-night! To-morrow they warp her in beside the quay, her crew comes aboard, her armament, her provisions, and she is made ready for sea. Holy Mother, such a chance, and only for to-night! Think of it, señor, and wonder no longer if I seemed crazed. She lies out there now in the darkness, swinging to a single anchor chain, her steam up, the nearest battery a quarter of a mile away, and not a half dozen men aboard her. It is as a gift of heaven! Yet, *sangre*

de Cristo! he who should lead the venture lies delirious from fever. Was there ever such cursed luck before!" He gripped his head between his two hands, but I was already upon my feet, my mind instantly grasping the situation.

"Don Emilio," I exclaimed eagerly, gripping his shoulder, and compelling him to look up, "let me understand this clearly. You had perfected plans to capture and run off this *Esmeralda* the moment war was formally declared? You have organized a crew for the work, and they are waiting the word here now in Valparaiso? Their leader is suddenly stricken ill, and you have no one capable of taking his place — is that why you have come to me?"

"*Si, si*, señor."

"How did you learn about me?"

"From Señor Loring. He has lived in Peru. I have known him long."

"But you must have other officers in your party; what of them?"

He spread his hands in a gesture of utter helplessness.

"Señor, I brought with me only the one. It was not safe to bring more. Besides, what need? This Valparaiso is a great seaport; here we may always find the scum of the Seven Seas; here ever are plenty men glad enough to fight and plunder — 't is their trade. *Cielo!* we could enroll a hundred devils in an hour along the water-front, hell-hounds of the ocean, caring nothing for the flag above them if the pay be good."

"True; and you have them ready at hand. Where are they?"

"At the wine shop of Rodrigues beyond the plaza. You know the place?"

I nodded, my memory instantly recalling the foul den.

"How many?"

"Twenty — it is enough for a surprise, and they are sea-rats, señor."

"But they are under officers?"

"Of their own kind, yes, but not of our Navy. The first officer is a Yankee whaleman; the second I know not what, only he is a deep-water sailor."

"I see," I acknowledged, taking a long breath, yet continuing to stare at him. "What you need is some one able to command such an outfit, one who can operate a steamship."

Like a flash the official envelope came forth again.

"*Si, si*, and you can do that, señor. I know; I have been told. You hate this Chile; you fight her already in the hills; you hide here now for your life. I come to give you a chance to get away free. But I not stop even with that; no, no, my country not stop with that. See! here I possess the commission, all signed and sealed by my Government, of a captain in the Peruvian Navy. Only is the name left blank for me to write in. I write in your name; that makes you an officer of the Peruvian Navy. See you what it means? Chile dare not touch you except as prisoner of war. Is that not right, señor? But I not stop even with that — no, no! When the *Esmeralda* comes safely to Peru, the Government pays you five thousand American dollars in gold. I pledge you that, I, Emilio de Castillo, Admiral."

I walked the floor twice from wall to wall, thinking swiftly, the sodden cigar clinched tightly between my teeth. It was a desperate scheme, no doubt, yet the chances of success were infinitely better than I had any occasion to hope for. I could perceive no reason why the deed might not be accomplished if luck favored, and I was sufficiently young so that the danger rather appealed than repelled. Suddenly I wheeled and faced him, still seated at the table.

"You may fill out the blank, señor," I announced quietly. "I will try a throw of the dice."

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH I MEET MY CREW

THE polite hotel clerk halted me as I passed his desk on the way out with information that a drunken naval officer — evidently Sanchez — had been there twice already seeking me, had also asked for Lord Darlington, and would return again at ten o'clock. I thanked him, smiling to myself, wondering if the English nobleman was to be challenged also, and promptly disappeared into the night without. The unfortunate affair with the aggrieved lieutenant had become a small matter no longer troubling me.

I have wandered by night through most of the seaports of the world, knowing well the intricacies and dark places of Port Saïd, Melbourne, and Calcutta, but I doubt if even the unspeakable Orient can equal for dirt, squalor, crime, and peril those narrow, crooked alley-ways where sailors most do congregate against the Valparaiso water-front. Here gather in bestial rioting the scum of the South Seas, and here flourish their parasites. Any night a trip alone through those foul lanes is of the kind to test strong nerves; but on this special occasion, the way filled with pandemonium and drunkenness, the entire city a riot of noisy violence, the populace aroused to fierce hate toward all foreigners, the passage was one

of constantly recurring danger. The street lights, few and far between, were mere blotches of color winking feebly at the surrounding darkness, the rough cobblestone pavement underfoot was irregular and deceitful, while drunken crowds, either quarrelsome or maudlingly affectionate, surged aimlessly about, gesticulating and yelling with Latin fervor. However, I knew the way well, and kept myself hidden from observation by hovering close beneath the protecting shadows of the buildings, drawing well back within doorways to permit the noisier parties of revellers to pass, and then hurrying forward along the deserted streets. It was like running a gantlet, for every curse reaching my ears was directed against foreigners, and the wild spirit of the aroused mob was evidenced everywhere. I stumbled over the body of more than one drunken man, while sounds of quarrelling were borne to me through the open doors of every low taproom I passed. The scum of Valparaiso had come to the top, the fires of hell burning fiercely. Fortunately the main drift of this human tide was toward the plaza, and as I penetrated more deeply into the foul network of black, ill-lighted lanes, the passage became clearer, the sounds of rioting less boisterous.

Pedro Rodrigues' den stood somewhat back from the narrow lane it fronted, flanked and concealed by taller buildings on either side. It was a ramshackle, wooden affair, sagging sadly at one corner, the half dozen steps leading to the open door being only dimly lighted. As it was a well-known resort, frequented almost entirely by foreign seamen who would scarcely be safe on the streets such a night as this, it was no surprise to discover the

taproom densely crowded with sailor-men, and to distinguish a voice singing lustily in vigorous English, to an accompaniment of glasses pounding upon the rough tables. Indeed a wild, hilarious mob greeted me loudly, as I pressed aside the heavy curtain, and stepped within. It was a fairly large, low-ceiled apartment, the atmosphere stifling with the fumes of cheap tobacco and every variety of liquor, humming with voices conversing in a dozen tongues, the entire space densely crowded with as rough a sea-scum as ever I looked upon beneath one roof. I cast a quick, comprehensive glance over the faces, upturned through the enveloping haze — Swedes and Finns from the North Sea, Dutchmen of the Baltic, hairy Englishmen from the Channel, Yankees of the West Atlantic, beach-combers from out the South Seas, with here and there a Negro or brown-faced Kanaka to add to the variety. Faith, it was a choice collection, as though the wide waters of the world had been skimmed to bring together that rare crew of beauties. Perched high upon a table, his long legs encased in sea boots, seated astride a chair, sat the singer, his mop of coarse red hair standing erect, his jaw that of a bull-dog, the scar of a recent knife-wound showing ghastly across one cheek, his blue shirt open at the throat to reveal a hairy chest; beneath thatched brows his eyes glinted and gleamed in a ferocious attempt at good humor.

"Sing, ye bullies!" he roared, after one inquiring glance toward me, bringing his heavy glass down on the back of the chair. "Lay it out fer the gent, whut has just come callin' on ye. Tune up, ye sea dogs. I 'm no

hopera hartist here to entertain ye. Give us a swing to the chorus now, or I 'll shy this mug into yer bloomin' faces. Lift the tune, my hearties, and show the dagoes outside whut ye can do. Now at it:

" The Captain's bride was fair to see;
Swing hard! bend low!
She mocked at him; she smiled at me;
Swing hard! bend low!"

" Oh, to hell wid that sorter love-sick stuff," cried a protesting voice hoarsely. " That 's no good sailor song, Bill. Give us somethin' to start our pipes."

" Ay, mate," chimed in another; " lift us a deep-sea chantee, an' we 'll all tune up."

The giant in the chair scowled.

" Ye 're a lot o' dubs, an' not fit sailor-men," he retorted savagely, draining his glass; " but I 've got a chorus ye 'll either sing or fight me, an' dam' if I care much which. Now take a grip at this:

"A mighty man was Pat McCann,
Who sailed upon the sea;
Within his hold he hid the gold,
He stole in Barbaree.
In Barbaree, in Barbaree
The men lie mute,
He has the loot,
He found in Barbaree."

They were still at it, the motley, mongrel crew, their hoarse, drink-thickened voices roaring out lines full of the fierce swing of the deep sea, their glasses pounding in unison on the tables, as I pushed my way through

them up to the sloppy bar, and faced the fellow standing behind.

"Is there a Yankee whaleman here by the name of Tuttle?" I asked.

He stared at me, his eyes squinting, while the wild chorus began to die away like a clock run down.

"Bill, whar's Cap' Tut'?" he called out finally. "Here 's a cove wants him."

The red-headed giant, perched aloft on the chair, flung one hand indifferently across his shoulder toward the rear of the room.

"Come on again, mates," he roared. "Another drink, and another song. Spit it out this time — '*Swing hard! Bend low!*'"

"He 's yonder in the back room; through that door, mate," said the bartender shortly. "Better not tread on any of the lads' feet goin' in, unless maybe ye 're here to-night huntin' trouble. They 're just 'bout drunk enough now to be ready to start a row."

I picked my way with caution, the fierce lilt of that devils' chorus stunning my ears, the hairy faces confronting me scowlingly suggestive of any crime. Saint Andrew! I thought soberly, if this was still the day of the pirates here was a brood ready for hatching. With a feeling of positive relief I pressed open the heavy wooden door, stepped within, and closed it carefully behind me. So tightly fitting and solid the wood it instantly shut out completely the mad riot of the bar room. It was like coming into a new world. Two men sat alone at a small, round table smoking, between them a short-necked black bottle with glasses, and a

scattered deck of greasy cards. A single oil lamp, the flame yellow and flaring, hung suspended on a wire from a blackened beam overhead, and I paused, my hand on the latch, just long enough to take hasty survey of the faces turned toward me. The one nearest where I stood, tall, long-limbed, angular, his face thin and made to appear more so from a sandy chin-whisker, had his knees swung over the arm of his chair, a bald spot on the top of his head shining conspicuously beneath the rays of the lamp. His companion was considerably younger, somewhat trim of build, with black, curling hair, and small moustaches curled upward at the tips. He was of a complexion to make me think him either a creole or quadroon, but with smiling lips and a light in his merry eyes bespeaking a temperament of good humor.

"Captain Eli Tuttle?" I questioned doubtfully.

The older man slowly deposited his feet on the floor, and stood up. He was a trifle round-shouldered, attired in a black frock coat which dangled to the knees, and his eyes of cold gray narrowed into mere slits as he inspected me with undisguised suspicion.

"The spirit which for seventy years hath made answer to that earthly name still abideth within this fleshly body," he responded solemnly, in a voice seemingly from the very pit of his stomach. "I am still permitted to sail the seas, thus known to the children of men, awaiting in patience the hour of translation."

To be greeted thus in such a spot stunned me for the instant, my cheeks flushing as I read undisguised amusement in the upturned face of the creole. My teeth shut together hard.

"You are Eli Tuttle then, formerly master of the whaling bark *Betsy?*"

"Even so, young man," his lean face perfectly emotionless, his long fingers outspread flat on the table. "Eli Tuttle, of New Bedford, once the chief of sinners, but now communing with the higher life of the spirit world. Associate me not with yonder ungodly crew, blind to the truth of the beyond," and he snapped his fingers softly toward the closed door. "In this world saints and sinners must indeed mingle bodily, yet not in any communion of spirit. It was for peaceful meditation that friend De Nova and I deserted yonder scene of revelry, and sought this secluded spot. Truly the good Book saith that where one or two are gathered together in His name there is He also in the midst of them."

The creole laughed outright, smiting the table smartly with his palm.

"Sit down, mate!" he exclaimed genially, kicking up a chair. "After you know zis ol' hypocrite as well as I do, his communion viz spirits won't bozzer you much. Help yourself to drink, an' wash the taste out you' mouth."

Tuttle wheeled about and stared at his companion, his thin jaw working savagely; but the creole went on rolling a cigarette indifferently between his brown fingers, his white teeth gleaming. I remained standing, my hand on the back of the chair, intently studying the pair.

"I come directly from Don Castillo," I said, quietly facing the Yankee, and determined to get down to business, "and desire to speak with you alone."

His glinting eyes narrowed perceptibly, and his jaws crunched down upon the tobacco in his cheek.

"'T is safe enough with him," he acknowledged rather ungraciously, his voice becoming nasal as he pointed his chin-beard toward the other. "De Nova is second officer."

I drew back the chair, and sat down, realizing that I now possessed the attention of both.

"I have been appointed to assume Captain Castelar's duties," I announced quietly. "Do either of you care to examine my papers?"

Tuttle spat silently into the sawdust, while De Nova exhibited his white teeth in a grin. The eyes of the two men met.

"I rather guess your papers won't cut much ice in this-yere affair," returned the former with deliberate insolence, "being as how we don't either of us give a tinker's dam' fer Peru, if you'll pardon my sayin' so plainly."

His mask had disappeared as by magic, and I realized instantly the real nature of the man.

"You mean no enlistment has been made, either by you, or the men under you?"

"That's just about the size of it, mister," his tone full of unconcealed contempt, his leg flung once again over the arm of the chair. "We agreed to do this one particular job fer a certain consideration, but we're none of us Peruvian sailor-men, and consequently don't give a hang for your papers. Ain't that about it, De Nova?"

The creole nodded, still smiling pleasantly, the blue smoke curling lazily up from the end of his cigarette.

Evidently the two were actively engaged in taking my measure, and this was to be a case of man against man, rather than the exercise of any delegated authority. I might as well throw my commission into the fire for any real value it possessed here. All right; I had met and attended to their kind before.

"I am delighted to understand the situation so clearly and quickly," I said sharply, throwing a note of authority into my voice and manner. "It simplifies my task. Now listen to me, Mr. Tuttle," giving him his formal title, "and you likewise, De Nova. I probably care as little for those papers as either of you, but, nevertheless, I am in command. Do you both clearly comprehend that? — *I am in command!* It will be just as well for you not to attempt any horse-play. I am no dago sea-officer, but a North American sailor, and I did n't come crawling into my first ship through a cabin window. I 've tamed mutinous crews before now, and when I 'm up against sea-scum I can hit as hard as the next fellow. If either of you desire to test my qualities as a buckomate, I 'm here to accommodate you."

Neither answered, but I read their conclusion in their eyes.

"That 's all I need to say now," I went on. "It 's up to you to fish, or cut bait. You fellows have nothing to gain by opposing me, and I hope you possess sense enough to know it. De Nova, where have I ever met you before?"

The creole's face instantly brightened again, his white teeth gleaming under the black moustache.

"So monsieur remember," he lisped gently, leaning

forward on the table. "I thought maybe you forget altogether 'bout zat time. But I know you at once w'en you come in. It make me laugh to see zis Yankee try bait you like you was a dago steamboater. Bah, I know you all right for sailor-man; I know you do business."

"But I am unable to place you."

"*No*, not yet; maybe you will w'en I say more." He spoke rapidly, gesticulating with excitement. "It was a little ship off Hatteras; ze storm five days, an' all wreck. It was a steamer, w'ite, wiss red stacks, zat took off ze crew, an' it was hell of a job. Zat was ze story, monsieur; I was mate of ze *Cymbeline*."

I knew him then instantly, my memory picturing anew the cold, gray dawn, the green, angry seas, the helpless, sodden hulk heaving sickeningly to its death, and those water-drenched forms we hauled over the sinking rail into our tossing boat. Lord, it was a vivid sea picture, not to be blotted out in a year or two! I held forth my hand, and his brown fingers, hard as iron, closed over it in a grip to be felt.

"Sure, it 's come back, mate," I said. "I rather guess I can count on you."

His dark eyes met mine in frank honesty.

"Running arms for the Cuban revolutionists then, were n't you?" I asked indifferently. "What since?"

He shrugged his shoulders, glancing across at Tuttle, and fingering his moustache.

"*Sacre!* it has been as ze devil drove," easily. "Ze last was sandalwood in ze South Seas. I care little, so ze pay be good."

"Then we will get down to facts," and I sat back in the chair fronting the two of them. "Mr. Tuttle, how many men have you enlisted for this affair?"

"Twenty."

"Those fellows out yonder?" and I nodded toward the closed door. He exhibited his yellow teeth, his eyes narrowing.

"They 'll be about all ye 'll want to tackle, I guess," he volunteered, with some assumption of cheerfulness, "unless maybe you decide to turn this expedition into piracy, an' give 'em half the spoils. They 're that sort, all right."

I straightened back in my chair, my jaws set hard, my gaze endeavoring vainly to catch and hold his shifty eye.

"Mr. Tuttle," I said sternly, "as I understand matters I am captain this cruise, and you 're mate. Whenever I desire your advice I 'll probably ask for it. Just at present please confine yourself to my questions. What crew have you?"

The expression of his face was angry enough, yet he evidently thought best to answer civilly.

"First and second officers, boatswain and gunner, five coal-heavers, the rest seamen."

"Nationality?"

"Every mongrel race under the sky."

"You have no engineer?"

He shook his head negatively.

"Could n't pick up any; however, there 's one on board, and, no doubt, we can persuade him to stick to the job."

The man's manner and tone remained surly and insolent, but I gripped my indignation and held back the hot words burning my tongue. It was necessary that I make the best of it now, but after we were once safely at sea I intended very shortly to take the measure of this Yankee whaleman. I watched him a moment silently, as he leaned back in his chair, with long, thin legs sprawled out, his lean jaws crunching at the tobacco in his cheek. My eyes wandered toward the olive-tinted face of De Nova, barely visible through the enveloping smoke of his cigarette. The latter nodded cheerfully, as though he interpreted my thought.

"Oh, ze men was all right, monsieur," he put in smilingly. "Maybe a bit rough, but, *sacre*, w'at would you?" his shoulders rising to the question. "Mr. Tuttle he grumble, but it was all bark. I know him, an' I razzer have him so zan hear him talk to ze spirits; w'en he do zat, it make me sick, by gar!"

"You blaspheming, mongrel infidel," the whaleman's nasal voice rising shrill with anger. "I don't have to count beads in order to lift my soul to the other world."

"There is liable to be fighting enough before morning," I interposed sharply, fearing a quarrel, "without comrades falling out about their belief. Leave that for lubbers ashore to argue over. Now tell me what arrangements have been made for boarding the *Esmeralda?*"

Tuttle spat into the sawdust, his gaze still on De Nova.

"Two boats concealed beneath the piling of the

Mercantile Company's coal wharf; a whaleboat and a cutter."

"Any arms?"

"A dozen rifles, six to each boat."

I arose to my feet, glancing at my watch in the dim light. He had not given me the customary "sir" in any of his replies, yet I ignored the omission, willing for the time being to sink formality for the sake of action.

"Very well, Mr. Tuttle. Have your men there in an hour from now. They had better travel in parties of two; and see that they start out sober. You understand these orders clearly, I hope, sir: — have them there in an hour, *sober*. De Nova, you must know how to bring sailor-men to their senses; get busy with that gang. Now work rapidly and quietly, both of you, for if we get caught, this is likely to be a hanging matter for all of us."

I stared at the two of them for just an instant — De Nova on his feet, Tuttle leaning forward in his chair — and stepped forth into the outer room, closing the door behind me. A drunken yell greeted my re-entrance into the boisterous crowd, but ignoring everything, glancing neither to right nor left, I picked my way through the motley gathering out into the welcome blackness of the night.

CHAPTER V

IN WHICH WE GAIN THE DECK

I PAUSED a moment amid the dense shadows to reflect more carefully upon some of the details of our night's work. For the first time I clearly realized the desperate nature of this adventure upon which I was so recklessly embarked. Success or failure, liberty or death, depended on the first hour — the slightest mistake, an alarm, an unforeseen accident would utterly ruin everything. Could we once attain the yacht's deck unobserved and make our attack with sufficient swiftness to prevent the discharge of firearms, the rest might be accomplished without great risk of discovery, barring some unexpected mishap. The very audacity of such an attempt was strongly in our favor. If we succeeded in silently warping the *Esmeralda* beyond range of the guns of the shore batteries all real and immediate danger would be over. Probably not a war-vessel in the harbor had steam up, and, if they did, no Chilean war-ship could hope to overhaul us when once fairly at sea. The *Esmeralda* had taken on coal, the lighters had been alongside her for three days, and the end of the venture would merely be a simple question of steaming, and a short, swift run up the coast.

I gave the personnel of the crew Tuttle had collected brief consideration. They were no rougher than I should

naturally expect men to be who were volunteering for such a task. Besides, Jack ashore and Jack at sea are two widely differing personalities; once sobered and on shipboard, steadied somewhat by the perils of their position, and exhilarated by the promised reward, they would doubtless prove efficient enough. Tuttle might require a lesson in sea etiquette, and, if he did, I felt perfectly confident of my ability to administer it promptly and forcibly. As for De Nova, I had no doubt that he would prove himself a good man. So, altogether, my spirits rose as I thus contemplated a definite plan of action. I worked my way slowly amid the darkness down to the water-front, stealing out through a mass of litter to the end of the coal wharf, and exploring the black surface of the bay with my night-glasses.

The movement on the water was only the merest ripple, with the riding lights of the various ships at anchor reflected back as from a giant mirror. It was a strangely silent, motionless scene, full of the gloom of the night, the sky above opaque and starless. Two vessels, a full-rigged ship and a small schooner, lay close in shore, apparently deserted, their decks gloomy wastes, their bare spars sticking up skeleton-like and ghostly. Farther out, and somewhat to the left, a yellow lantern, perhaps in the bow of a guard-boat, bobbed about, zig-zagging here and there like some erratic star. The gently moving water rippled musically against the piling beneath where I crouched, and my ears distinguished the singing of a far distant voice, echoing and reëchoing across the liquid expanse. It was some time before I could locate with any certainty the particular vessel I

sought. The harbor was littered with sea craft of every description, and my knowledge regarding the *Esmeralda* was most meagre, being merely her point of anchorage, and that she was a large steam-yacht, schooner rigged.

Finally, into the focus of the levelled glasses, there crept indistinctly the delicate tracery of her bow, rendered more plainly visible beneath the green radiance of her riding lamp. I searched along the exposed side with all the vigilance possible at that distance and through such obscurity, marking the tautness of her anchor-chain as she strained to the outflow of the tide, the dark wreath of smoke curling lazily from the funnels, and the total absence of any movement along her decks. Lights were showing faintly through several portholes amidships, certain proof that she was not entirely deserted; yet the cabins aft were dark, and the only moving figure I could distinguish with certainty was slowly pacing back and forth along the lee rail of the poop. The bridge, behind its protection of tarpaulins, was a mass of shadows which my glass could not penetrate. Suddenly, out from the enveloping smudge, came a shower of sparks and a red glare, and, a moment later, I traced the outlines of a steam-launch cleaving the black water. It quickly vanished behind the fog wreaths hanging to seaward, the faint sound of its churning dying away, leaving the silent loneliness behind more solemnly impressive than ever. Only from off the land came echoing the noises of men — the loud *vivas*, the reiterated boom of explosives, the ceaseless blare of bands. Above the city the black sky was still spangled with gleaming lines of fire, but only an occasional rocket, soaring higher than

its fellows, shone in ghastly reflection across the dark harbor and on the decks of deserted ships.

The scene became oppressive in its barrenness, and I felt the need of movement to overcome its weakening effect upon the nerves. This was to be a night of action, not of dreams, so I groped my uncertain path back along the littered wharf and around the sharp curve of the shore line, beneath the gloomy shadows of coal sheds. Apparently there was little requirement for caution, as the entire water-front appeared denuded of inhabitants, the usual scum having drifted elsewhere under the spell of excitement, even the accustomed patrol of guards deserting their posts in a patriotic fervor of celebration. Of lights there were comparatively none, if I except the uncertain glimmer of rockets along the water's surface, and I was consequently compelled to feel my way from object to object like a blinded man. Still, the course was sufficiently familiar so that I successfully maintained both footing and direction, finally emerging safely close beside the spot appointed for our rendezvous. There was considerable open space here, the Mercantile Company's sheds standing some thirty feet back of the shore line, and their wharf for the unloading of barges extending more than fifty feet out into the harbor. I could dimly perceive a great crane at the farther extremity, with dangling buckets, outlined against the sky. The night was too dark for me to decipher the face of my watch, yet it could not now be long before the arrival of the men. I crouched down beside a post to await their coming, once again searching the harbor with my night-glasses.

The company at last arrived by twos from out the

enveloping gloom, silently grouping themselves amid the shadows. I could distinguish an occasional gruff cough, and the shuffling of feet, but there was no sound of conversation or hilarity. Evidently De Nova had sufficiently sobered them to their duty. At last one man detached himself from among the crowd, and moved stealthily forward. I met him at the shore end of the wharf, and peered into his face, half-concealed beneath the visor of his cap, until I recognized the fellow.

"Crew all here, Mr. Tuttle?"

"Yes, sir," he answered, startled by my sudden appearance into courteous response, "but mighty uneasy to be off."

"They shall not be delayed. Get the boats out at once. You are to take charge of the whaleboat, and I will accompany De Nova in the cutter. Pull silently to the end of the wharf, and lie by there to await instructions. Do your men understand the boats they are assigned to?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"Very well then; get the boats out, and the crews aboard. Not a sound, remember, for there are guards patrolling the harbor."

I must confess this preparatory work was well and smartly accomplished, the men the merest silent shadows as they hauled the two hidden boats forth from concealment and quietly took their assigned places at the oars. Tuttle's crew was first afloat, De Nova experiencing some difficulty from attempting to load too near shore, in somewhat shallow water.

"Drop overboard, two of you, and shove off," I ordered finally. "Lively now, lads, but no splashing."

The two fellows in the stern lowered themselves into the shallow water, bending down so as to put their shoulders against the planks for a heave. Suddenly, not three feet distant, a smudge of shadow uplifted, and I became conscious of a pallid human face gleaming faintly through the dark. Instantly I leaped toward it, with such force as to send the heavily laden boat swirling forward, the heaving men plunging face downward into the water. There was a startled exclamation in Spanish, a short-arm blow shot into a dimly revealed, half familiar face, a fierce grip at the throat, and the two of us were on the sand, grappling like wild cats. Out of the water, dripping from their bath, the two seamen came to my aid, and, between us, we pinned the fellow to helpless silence.

"Toss him into the boat," I said, panting from exertion. "He will be safer with us than left ashore."

It appeared even darker out on the water than when we looked off upon it from the land, but, with a few cautious strokes, we discovered the smudge which represented Tuttle's whaleboat, and drew up within an oar's length of where he lay waiting.

"Mr. Tuttle," I began, speaking slowly and concisely so the men in both boats could hear, "this is going to be no boys' play to-night, and I expect implicit obedience to my orders. Do exactly what I tell you and no more. You know the situation of the *Esmeralda*, and I want you to put your whaleboat in under her bow. If you keep a point east of north you can scarcely miss it. There is a lumping big brigantine anchored a hundred feet beyond, with only a single light showing on her foremast.

If you come up under her shadow you are not likely to be seen before you drift down against the *Esmeralda's* cutwater. Make use of the anchor-chain, and get half a dozen men quietly over the forecastle rail. Don't move from there until you receive some signal from me. Then clap down the forecastle scuttle, and make straight for the engine-room. That will comprise the entire duty of your crew ; and, above all things, let it be accomplished *silently*. Don't permit one of your men to carry a loaded firearm. Use belaying pins, if you need to, or a marlinspike, but no guns. De Nova and I will go in by way of the stern, and we will be responsible for the after-deck and the bridge. I 've been studying the yacht through my night-glasses, and the only signs of life on board are in the engine-room. There may be an anchor watch on deck, but that need make us no trouble if we are only quick and quiet. Has any one a question to ask ? "

There was no response, the only sounds audible being the soft lapping of the water and the deep breathing of the men. I could distinguish them leaning eagerly forward, but the faces were indecipherable in the gloom.

" You understand clearly ? "

" Ay, ay, Mr. Stephens," and Tuttle's nasal voice had completely lost all its former trace of insolence.

" Then pull away slowly, and noiselessly ; don't hurry ; we 'll give you plenty of time to get in. Good-bye, and good luck to you."

The balanced oars dipped gently into the water, scarcely rippling it, and the sharp-stemmed whaleboat glided away into the surrounding blackness like a ghost.

"All right now, De Nova," I whispered. "I 'll go forward into the bow. Keep her head off about a point and watch out sharp for signals."

We slipped through the water silently, the sound of the dipping oar-blades little more audible than the suppressed breathing of the oarsmen. I lay with head thrust well forward over the protected stem, peering anxiously ahead through my night-glasses, every nerve alert, yet oddly confident of success. Somewhat to our left, yet already far enough away so as to be no longer dangerous, I picked up the steam-launch. Down beside the wharf, where I had rested earlier in the evening, appeared the bobbing yellow light which I supposed marked the presence of a guard-boat. But directly ahead the waters of the harbor appeared clear and deserted. Confident that if any eyes were watching from the deck they were not likely to be directed astern, we made wide detour, creeping cautiously in beneath the slight bulge of the yacht's side, until the fellow behind me fastened his boat-hook firmly into the after-chains. Breathlessly we waited listening, but no sound reached us other than the slight hiss of escaping steam.

"Hold hard!" I whispered, the word passing back from man to man. "Two remain with the boat, the rest follow me."

I crept silently up into the chains, and peered cautiously over onto the open deck. It was wrapped in darkness and silence, the sole gleam of revealing light coming from out the open main-hatch, and that only the merest glimmer slightly illuminating the ship amidships. There was a lamp alight in the after-cabin, but

the shades were drawn so closely I could scarcely perceive its presence. I became aware that De Nova stood beside me.

"There is certainly no watchman aft," I announced softly, "unless he be found upon the other side of the cabin. Batten down the companionway, while I examine the deck. Two of you men come with me."

We dropped over the low rail together, moving silently in our stocking-feet. The roof of the cabin, forming the quarter-deck, extended clear to the rail. We groped over this shadowed space as though exploring a cave, encountering nothing except a few camp-stools, although my fingers discovered a goodly sized boat swinging from davits across the stern. From the opposite side we could peer forward toward the dim light streaming from out the hatch, the deck being thus fairly revealed as far as the funnel. Beyond, all remained black and impenetrable. A man sat upon a bench against the side of the galley, a dull red showing from his pipe bowl. His earliest knowledge of our presence was when the two men closed on his windpipe, and I pressed a revolver muzzle against his cheek.

"Not a sound, Jack," I muttered sternly in Spanish, "or else your life pays for it."

The pipe fell with a click to the deck, the fellow's eyes staring up at us, his opened mouth showing oddly amid a surrounding gray beard. A moment later, securely gagged and bound, we rolled his body close in against the rail.

"I thought I heard a bit of a blow and a yelp on the fo'castle just now, sir," said one of the men, pointing

eagerly forward. I stood still, intently listening, staring into the gloom.

"Quiet enough there at present. Probably Mr. Tuttle has been attending to the for'ard watch. Come on, lads, and we'll join forces with him."

Beyond all doubt the main-deck was clear as far as the bridge, and, providing Tuttle's crew had attended to their share of the work, as far as the fo'castle head as well. The lucky stars which guard audacity had already shown their friendship, and we were practically in control of the steamer. Yet this was no time to be overconfident; the deck was so dark with the shadows, it might still conceal enemies in plenty. We advanced cautiously, keeping close within the denser shade along the weather-rail, pausing a moment to peer over the edge of the open hatchway into the illuminated space below. Two Kanakas, naked to the waist, their slim, brown bodies glistening, each grasping the handle of a coal scoop, were backed up against a bulkhead conversing, while on a low stool, tipped back to a comfortable angle, his feet on the rounded crosspiece, a pipe in his mouth, his hands buried deep in his pockets, sat a white man, with red face and long sandy moustaches. His brown overalls and pink undershirt told nothing distinctive, but the uniform cap, pushed well back on his bristling stock of hair, proclaimed him the vessel's engineer. He appeared a stockily built, burly fellow, his chin obstinate, his eyes deep set under shaggy brows. As I drew back from this swift survey, Mr. Tuttle suddenly rounded the end of the chart-house, and, with whispered word of inquiry to one of the men, advanced to meet me.

"Well," I said as soon as certain of his identity, "the after-deck is ours without a blow; what have you discovered forward?"

"Two men were posted on the fo'castle, sir," he returned, the disagreeable nasal tone apparent even in his subdued voice. "We got them both, but Mason was pricked with a knife during the scuffle."

"Did you close the fo'castle?" I questioned briefly.

"All fast, sir, but I doubt if any of the crew are below."

"Well, there are some down in the engine-room, and the fellow in charge looks as if he might fight on occasion. Take half a dozen men with you, and jump below. The Kanakas won't make any serious trouble, but you had better clap a gun to the engineer."

I watched them as they swarmed like rats over the hatch-combing and dropped down into the light. There was a scurrying of bodies, a sharp exchange of blows, a yelp of alarm from the startled Kanakas, a stout volley of English oaths, and, when the tangle partially cleared away, the engineer was lying flat on his back, the knee of the big singer at Rodrigues' at his chest, and Tuttle holding a blue-barrelled revolver at his ear. I never beheld an angrier man, but he was helpless as a baby. Assured of the future of the engine-room, I mounted the steps, and took hasty survey of both bridge and wheelhouse. They were unoccupied — the vessel was entirely in our possession.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH WE ATTAIN THE OPEN SEA

OUR adventure had been successfully accomplished through its first step; now it remained to get safely out to sea. As I turned to retrace my steps to the deck I encountered De Nova coming up.

"Pretty lucky job, monsieur," he said jovially. "It was w'at you call ze picnic, I bet. Ze companion was lock', an' ze guard posted. W'at more now for me?"

"Relieve Mr. Tuttle in the engine-room. Keep three men below there with you, and arm them as guards. Make the Kanakas do the firing, and hold the engineer to it with a gun at his head. You know enough about a stoke-hole to tell whether things are going right, don't you?"

He nodded, and I could see the gleam of his white teeth.

"Then get your steam up, but don't let those fellows fire so as to drive any flame out the stack, and watch that Johnny Bull so that he can't put any kinks in the machinery. Don't take your eyes off him. Do you understand the signals?"

"Ay, ay, monsieur."

"Then stand by. We 'll tow out at once with the boats, but I want you ready for business the very

moment we cast off the lines. Send all the rest of the men on deck, and ask Mr. Tuttle to report to me here immediately."

I was not kept waiting. Two men came stumbling up the companionway together. I peered at them, uncertain of their identity in the gloom.

"Is that you, Mr. Tuttle?"

"Yes, sir. This is Johnson, one of the wheelsmen; thought you would likely need him, so I brought him along."

"Very good. Johnson, go on up into the wheel-house, and see that all is clear. I 'll give you directions later. Mr. Tuttle, we 'll tow out until we get the sweep of the sea fairly under our forefoot. Get the lines out to the boats at once, with full crew at the oars. You are to take command, and I shall have to trust you for the course, as we can't risk signalling. I presume you are acquainted with the harbor lights?"

"Been in here eight times in ten years without a pilot."

"Then you ought to know the course. But take no chances; feel your way, only keep the ropes taut. Have you any man fit to take charge of the second boat? I need De Nova below."

"The boatswain, sir; that big fellow with the scar."

"What 's his name?"

"Bill Anderson."

"All right; put him in the cutter. Leave me three men on deck, and post the best one of the lot at the stern line ready to cast off. As soon as you get the ropes out I 'll slip the anchor-chain, and leave the flukes

in the mud. Work lively now; we must be well out at sea before daylight."

He stood leaning against the rail, peering out over the water, his hands shading his eyes.

"Have you spotted any guard-boats with your glasses?" he questioned uneasily.

"Only that one yonder; see, the yellow light just rounding the stem of that big brig. There was a steam-launch out there to the west about twenty minutes ago, but it seems to have disappeared."

"Swallowed up in the fog likely," he admitted, snuffing the air like a pointer dog. "We 'll find it banked pretty heavy outside, or I 'm a lubber. Well, so much the better for our job. We 've certainly been in the hands of Providence so far, sir, for there 's generally half a dozen patrol boats prowling about; everybody drunk to-night, I guess. All right, Mr. Stephens, I 'm off, and we 'll have you in tow in a jiffy. I 'll put the nigger at the stern line; he 's the best all-round hand on board."

However I may have disliked and distrusted the whaleman he certainly proved himself an able seaman and a smart officer. He comprehended every detail of his work, and held his men to it finely. I went forward with the two of the crew left behind to assist me to pay out the lines, and stood by to let slip the anchor-chain. The two boats dropped away into the brooding darkness ahead, and we should have lost trace of them entirely but for the occasional dip of an oar, or the faint splash of a rope as it sagged in the water. Within twenty minutes we were in motion, moving slowly, yet

steadily, toward the black vacancy outlined by the harbor lights on either hand. There was no disturbing sound to betray progress, the yacht's sharp cutwater cleaving its passage through the liquid with the merest faint ripple, scarcely leaving a gleam of white foam behind, the oars dipping silently, the two lines held taut to the strain. We had carefully extinguished every light on board, passing a tarpaulin over the hatch, and closing the shutters of the engine-room portholes, thus stealing solemnly on like a veritable ghost ship, the bowsprit pointed toward the open sea ; the only semblance of life visible the black smoke pouring from the funnel, but as instantly lost amid masses of low-hanging cloud. Exultant, I climbed once again to the bridge, gave a few directions to the observant Johnson standing motionless at the wheel, and leaned anxiously over the rail, studying the water-front through levelled glasses.

It was a barren, deserted waste, except for a deeply laden schooner beating slowly up along the north shore under closely reefed topsails, and the gleaming lights of a large steamer just beginning to emerge faintly through the curtain of fog a trifle to the left of our course. She was coming in, and so directly in line with us I could distinguish both her lights, yet, if she proved a P. & L. liner, as was probable, she would sheer off presently, with a good mile to spare. The towing boats appeared as two insignificant blots on the surface, but that they were making excellent progress was proved by the way we were steadily drawing up toward the outer lights, already shining round and yellow through the increasing haze. The noisy whoop of a steam siren sounded from

out the impenetrable gloom off our port bow, yet I could trace no darker outline as I sought its cause. Far behind us, now mere lines of dim fire against the distant sky, I perceived the continuous shower of rockets being exploded above the city. With every moment they became fainter, the noise of jubilation long since lost astern.

How dark, silent, uncanny the gloom-enshrouded yacht appeared as I leaned over the tarpaulin-protected rail and gazed down on the deserted decks, no movement, no gleam of light anywhere visible. The two masts, for the vessel was schooner-rigged, rose rakishly and with noble sweep into the sky, yet I could trace little of the cordage against the expanse of cloud. They appeared skeleton-like reeds to be broken by a gust of wind. A slight fringe of white water alone marked our progress, while a misty vapor of escaping steam spoke of the chained engine and hissing boilers below. As I rested thus, the watchful Johnson grasping the spokes behind me, the momentous events of the past few hours swept through my mind like fragments of a strange, disconnected dream — my seemingly hopeless plight in Valparaiso; my controversy with Lieutenant Sanchez; my brief meeting with the Englishman; the friendly eyes of Doris; the throb of sudden interest aroused by her presence and as quickly lost again; the sudden swinging of the pendulum of Fate; the approach of De Castillo bringing unexpected opportunity for action and escape, and those later events which had so rapidly followed. I could scarcely comprehend the truth; nothing seemed real; all appeared a strange

fantasy; the very ease with which success had been attained left my surroundings dreamlike and illusionary. If there had only been a struggle, the decks below a shambles, my own head reeling from the effects of a blow, I could have grasped the truth more clearly. I struck my hand hard against the iron rail to assure myself I was awake, and to arouse my dormant faculties to action. The yellow beacon-light, flashing as it whirled in circuit, was already well off our quarter, and the sharp stem of the stolen vessel was beginning to rise and fall to the increasing swell of the open sea.

"Hold her steady as she is, Johnson," I said, my voice tremulous from sudden awakening. "I 'm going down to recall the boats."

"Steady as she is, sir."

I thrust my head cautiously beneath the protecting folds of tarpaulin to get a glimpse at the engine-room. Two seamen, each grasping a gun, leaned negligently against a bulkhead, while De Nova, bare-headed, his little black moustache clearly outlined against the olive of his cheek, occupied the stool between them. The Kanaka firemen were out of sight, but the red-faced engineer was on his knees tinkering over a refractory bolt with a monkey-wrench. The air came up into my nostrils hot and pulsating, and I could hear the constant throb of imprisoned steam.

"Everything down there working all right, Mr. De Nova?" I questioned quietly.

The eyes of the four men instantly turned toward me, the engineer straightening up, monkey-wrench in hand.

"No troubles here, monsieur," and the mate rose

to his feet, his white teeth showing. "W'ere are we now?"

"Just off the point, with the lighthouse dropping astern, and the swell of the ocean under our forefoot. I am going to call in the boats. Have you plenty of coal?"

"Bunkers all full, monsieur."

"How is your steam?"

He stepped over to the gauge, peering at it across the burly shoulder of the engineer, who still stood staring up at me.

"Pretty near up to ze danger mark, monsieur."

"Then stand by for signals."

The engineer came to life as though treated to an electric shock, his fist, still grasping the monkey-wrench, suddenly extended, his red face purpling with passion.

"You damned bloody pirate!" he yelled, glaring at me savagely. "It's hung the whole lot of you will be for this bloody night's work. No, I won't keep still, you moon-faced mulatto. I'm a free-born Briton, an' I'll smash in the heads of some of you yet, an' I'll live to see the rest hung in chains for the bloody pirates you are. Just wait till you're caught, an' then you won't be grinnin' that way at an honest man. Oh, you'll git it all right, my fine lads. There'll be hell to pay for this job, let me tell you! It's on nothin' you'll be dancin' then, you murderin' spawn o' hell!"

De Nova pressed the barrel of a revolver into the man's neck, with a stern threat and an unpleasant gleaming of white teeth. The sailors remained leaning on their guns, grinning as if in enjoyment of the play.

"Never min' w'at he say, sir," and the mate glanced up toward me, as if in apology. "He bust out zat way ever' fiv' minutes since we be down here. We have club him, two, t'ree time, but he stick here just ze same, an' run ze engine. *Oui, oui*, it just ze way wiz ze bull-headed Englisher."

"I see," I acknowledged, drawing back, "only watch that he does n't kink the machinery."

I was not in the least surprised at discovering one of his nationality in charge of the vessel's engine-room, nor was I sorry. He would feel little real interest in the affair, after he once clearly comprehended the situation, while a native Chilean might be impelled by a spirit of patriotism to cause us serious trouble. Englishmen were very frequently met with in foreign engine-rooms; this fellow had probably been picked up because of better qualifications than any native applicant; or, indeed, he might have been a member of the original crew of the yacht before it was disposed of to the Government. I would have a talk with him later; meanwhile he was certainly in good hands; and I had enough else to attend to. The tow-ropes came in hand over hand, and were coiled dripping on the forecastle deck. At the end of them the two boats emerged from out the fog, and the men tumbled in silently over the rail. I watched from the vantage of the bridge, as the whole crew tailed onto the falls, distinguishing Tuttle's nasal tones above the incessant shuffling of feet. Already the exhaust-pipe was becoming noisy from escaping steam, the planks underfoot throbbing to the pent-up energy being held in leash below.

"Nor'west by nor', Johnson — now hold her steady, my lad."

I pulled the signal cord, dimly distinguishing the faint responsive tinkle of the bell far beneath. Like a hound suddenly released for the chase, the steamer sprang forward into the fog wreaths and buried her sharp nose in the sea.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH I SUSPECT EVIL

EARLY dawn reached us in sodden gray, the sun a shapeless blob of dull red, with no vestige of its golden light forcing passage through those dense clouds of misty vapor closing us in as between curtained walls. The swell of the sea was not heavy, but the pervading gloom gave to the surrounding water a peculiarly sullen appearance, through which we tore, reckless of accident, at full speed. The deck planks were as wet as though it had rained heavily all night, ropes glistened with dripping moisture, while the dull iron of the handrails sparkled under the dim morning gleam. A new hand was at the wheel, Johnson having gone below an hour since, but I still clung to the bridge, my eyes heavy from peering forth into the fog-bank, my clothing sodden with the constant drip. Tuttle had been busy from stem to stern, his nasal voice continually rasping me as he drove the crew unmercifully to various tasks. Now the coming of the faint dawn enabled me to comprehend partially the nature of their labors, and I looked down upon a clear deck, shipshape and orderly, every rope securely coiled, every boat locked in its davits. The forward deck had been scrubbed, and the water was still dripping from the scupper holes, while dun-colored smoke was pouring from

out the galley chimney in cheerful promise of an early breakfast.

Only a few of the men were visible, three or four grouped about the capstan on the forecastle head, and as many more gathered along the lee side of the chart-house. Evidently regular watches were already chosen, and a portion of the crew had been turned in for their trick below. Tuttle himself, clad in wet, glistening oil-skins and looking gaunt and cadaverous, his chin-beard forking straight out over the high collar, was standing aft, beside the fellow who still kept guard over the companion. I moved across to the starboard end of the bridge, and, when he glanced around, made signal for him to join me. He came up the steps heavily, lifting the skirt of his long coat to keep from tripping on it. His face appeared tired and gray, with salt encrusted about the eyes, where waves had slapped him over the forecastle head. Barely glancing toward me, he stood gripping the rail, staring moodily out into the mist.

"Not very much chance of any one overhauling us in this fog, Mr. Tuttle," I said pleasantly. "It would be like hunting a needle in a haystack."

"'T is as the Lord wills," he returned, rather sourly. "Man proposes, but God disposes. The sun will lift that whole outfit in another hour. How far do you figure we 're off shore?"

"Figure it for yourself. We 're doing all of sixteen knots, and have been four hours at that speed. With another to be added, even our smoke ought to be below the horizon. We 've given them the slip all right, and from now on it 's merely a question of steaming to keep

ahead. I don't recall anything in the Chilean Navy that can overhaul us. What discoveries have you made below?"

He turned his crafty, glinting eyes toward me, twisting the lump of tobacco under his tongue. In some way, beneath the revealing daylight, I became even more distrustful of the man, more conscious of his hypocrisy.

"Not a great deal," his mouth attempting a grin; "except that we've got the crew caged. Everybody was ashore but the harbor watch."

"Then you found the forecastle empty?"

"Nothin' there but dunnage and bilge water; regular sea-parlor, sir."

"And no officer on board?" I asked, scarcely believing it possible.

"None, barring the engineer, so far as I know. The cabin was locked up by your orders, so I let that alone."

His eyes, keen enough, but perfectly expressionless, had deserted my face, and I leaned back against the front of the wheelhouse studying him intently. The fellow interested, even while he repelled me, leaving somehow upon my mind an impression that he was acting a part. This was a mere vague feeling, impossible of clear definition, yet one that I could not altogether shake off.

"And that then is all you have discovered, is it, Mr. Tuttle?"

He shifted his long legs, but made no effort to turn and face me.

"Well, I guess that's about the whole of it," he answered slowly, as though deliberating over the choice of words. "Only I'm a bit puzzled about some things what don't look just right. We started out, as I understand it, to run off with a Chilean warship named the *Esmeralda*, a schooner-rigged steam-yacht. That was the contract, was n't it, sir?"

I nodded gravely, wondering what the man could possibly be driving at.

"That was my understanding," his nasal tone becoming more pronounced and disagreeable. "And somehow what we've got here looks just a bit odd. This here is a schooner-rigged steam-yacht all right, an' I guess the tonnage is n't very far out of the *Esmeralda* class, but we have n't found a blame Chilean on board — two Swedes, a Dutchman, two Kanakas, an' a bloomin' English engineer."

"Well, what of that?" I broke in impatiently. "You know as well as I do that the entire Chilean Navy is filled with foreigners."

"Sure," he coincided, with a swift, questioning glance toward me; "that's all true enough, sir, but I never saw a whole crew of those beggars an' no Chilean bossin' 'em. But then that's only a part of it. Every one of them small boats down there, an' the life-preservers hangin' in front of the cabin, have got the name *Sea Queen* painted on them. Dam' if it ain't here too on this tarpaulin."

I bent over the rail looking down at the lettering he pointed out, yet with no feeling of uneasiness.

"Beyond doubt, that was the yacht's name before the

Chilean Government purchased her and renamed her *Esmeralda* for their service. She was bought from English parties, I 've heard. Probably the new owners have found no opportunity to repaint the name."

Tuttle drew forth a red bandanna and blew his nose, his voice more sullenly insolent as he resumed speech.

"Glad ye take it so cool, an' maybe yer right. However, it looks dam' odd to me."

I glanced aside at the wheelman apprehensively. The fellow was gazing straight ahead of him into the rapidly thinning fog. It was the manner of the mate more than his words that impressed me.

"See here, Mr. Tuttle," and I dropped my hand rather heavily on his sleeve, "kindly explain exactly what you are driving at. Do you intend to insinuate that we have made a mistake in the dark, and run off with the wrong vessel? Why, man, that is impossible. We are sailors, not landlubbers. Both of us have had chances to see the *Esmeralda*, and you certainly knew where she was moored yesterday."

"Well, when I come to think it over, I don't feel quite so everlastingly sure about that. The mind o' man is mighty deceitful," he admitted slowly. "You see, I never saw her any closer than maybe a mile, an' even then she was half hid behind other shippin'. Of course I took notice of her outline an' rig, but I did n't pay much attention to details. To-night we was all of us excited, an' colors don't show up much in the dark! Now her funnel is painted red, an' unless I 'm a liar the *Esmeralda's* was black with a yaller stripe round the top. You see, Mr. Stephens, we kept in pretty close

under cover all yesterday, an' maybe they hauled the *Esmeralda* up to the government docks, and run another boat into her anchorage."

I laughed aloud, not in the least impressed with his argument.

"A very likely story that there were two vessels in that harbor so near alike as to deceive all of us."

He remained stubbornly silent, evidently unconvinced, plucking at his chin-beard.

"There is a certain way of settling the matter," I went on decisively, "that is, by an examination of the papers in the cabin. Take charge of the bridge, and I 'll run down and clear up this affair beyond any further controversy. We may even have one of the ship's officers stowed away there, sleeping off his late celebration. If there is, he 's due for a rude awakening. Keep the yacht's head as she is, and I 'll be back directly."

I was aware that he watched me closely as I descended the steps, but felt little interest in such surveillance. That we could have been guilty of so serious an error as he suggested was beyond possibility. Nevertheless the mere suspicion was irritating, leaving me filled with a vague unrest. I wanted it definitely settled beyond controversy. It was quite true that I might have been deceived. I realized that, because I had enjoyed no opportunity to observe the *Esmeralda* in daylight, and no occasion to study her lines with care at any time. To me she had appeared merely as an extremely graceful vessel, interesting to the eye of a seaman. But Tuttle and his crew must have known the truth. If we were, indeed, on board the wrong vessel, it was from no

innocent mistake of the darkness, but rather the result of deliberate plan, the full purpose of which was beyond my comprehension. I swore savagely under my breath, even as I laughed sarcastically at the vague suspicion, aroused largely, as I well realized, by my increasing dislike of the ex-whaleman. The wrong ship? why, the very conception of such an accident was grotesque, ridiculous, beyond belief! It was the hallucination of a fool. One of the men assisted me to unbar the slide across the companionway, and, bidding him stand by ready for a hail, I started below, my fingers on the brass rail, my feet firm on the rubber-lined stairs.

These led into as handsome a sea-parlor as ever I remember gazing upon. Everything was effective and in elaborate taste, evidencing an expenditure that made me stare about in amazement. The decorations were of white and gold, a swinging lamp, still alight, and sparkling with prisms of cut glass, flung softened rays over rich carpets, upholstered chairs, and lockers, which were reflected back from numerous full-length mirrors adorning the walls. The white and gold coloring, together with these glasses, gave to the place a look of spaciousness which made me feel it for the moment as an imposing apartment. The long table had been elevated to the deck-beams, the legs folded up tightly beneath, so that the entire space was unobstructed except for the butt of the after-mast, which was garnished by color and surrounded by a cushioned divan. Farther aft stood a polished upright piano, evidently screwed firmly to the floor, the ivory keys exposed, and a sheet of music on the rack. Altogether it was a snug interior, ornate but homelike,

with ample proof that in its fitting money had been expended without stint. So deeply did it impress me that I remained there grasping the rail, gazing about in surprise, hesitating to press my investigations further. Yet this feeling was but momentary, the very desertion and silence quickly convincing me that the cabin contained no occupants. The movement of the vessel, the trampling of men on the deck, and the ceaseless noise of the screw were more noticeable here than forward, and no seaman, however overloaded with liquor he might have been the night before, could have slept undisturbed through the hubbub and changes of the past few hours.

Inspired to activity by this knowledge, and eager to settle the identity of our prize, I began closer examination of that impressive interior, although not entirely relieved from the spell of its royal magnificence. Six doors, three upon each side, opened off from the main cabin. The full-length mirrors occupied the spaces between, and the doors themselves were marvels of decoration and carving. Another, beneath the stairs, led directly into the steward's pantry, and revealed, besides, a passageway leading forward, probably to the lazarette amidships. The others, as I tried their brass knobs, exhibited merely comfortable state-rooms, fitted up for officers' use; three contained two bunks each, the others only one. Four of the beds had been carefully made, but the remainder were in disorder, as though quite lately occupied. Sea chests were in both the double state-rooms, with various articles of apparel swinging upon the hooks, while in one a uniform coat of blue and gold lay across a chair. The port was closed, and the light

so dim I was unable to decipher the emblem on the brass buttons. Everything impressed me as unusually clean and neat, evincing strict discipline. The only desk I noticed was a roll-top affair, securely locked, and with no litter of papers lying anywhere about. This, I figured, was probably the berth of the first officer; the captain's room would naturally be the one farthest astern.

The upright piano, with the high-backed cushioned chairs surrounding it, blocked my view aft, but on rounding these I observed a closed door, which apparently led into a room extending the entire width of the cabin. Never suspecting that it might be occupied, I grasped the brass knob, and stepped within. Instantly I came to a full stop, dazed by astonishment, my teeth clenched in quick effort at self-control. The color-scheme of the apartment was green, the tint shading from dark to light, yet prevalent everywhere on ceiling, walls, and floor. The entire scene burst in upon my consciousness with that first surprised survey, — the draped portholes opening out upon the gray fog-bank, the brass bed screwed to the deck, the chairs upholstered in green plush, the polished table with a vase of flowers topping it, the glistening front of a book-case in the corner, the tiger rug into which my feet sank. All these things I perceived, scarcely realizing that I did so, for my one true impression concentrated itself upon the living occupants.

There were two present. At a low dressing-table, her back toward me, fronting a mirror, yet with eyes fastened upon an open book lying in her lap, sat a woman. The lowered head yielded me only an indistinct outline of

her features, yet the full throat and rounded cheek gave pledge of both youth and beauty. Standing almost directly behind her chair, with short, curly locks, crowned by a smart white cap, her hands busied amid her mistress's tresses, was a maid, petite, roguish, fluttering about like a humming-bird. The latter saw me at once, pausing in her work with eyes wide open in surprise, but the preoccupied mistress did not even glance up. She must have heard the sound of the door, however, for she spoke carelessly :

" I thought you were never coming. What caused you to sail so suddenly ? "

These unexpected words, uttered so naturally, served partially to arouse me from the dull torpor of surprise. I clenched my hands, wondering if I was really awake, and stared back into the frightened eyes of the maid, who appeared equally incapable of articulation. Suddenly she found voice.

" It is not ze one, madame," she cried, shrinking back. " *Non, non ;* it is *un homme étranger.*"

" What is that you say, Celeste ? " and the other arose swiftly to her feet, the open book dropping to the floor as she turned to face me. Instantly I recognized her, in spite of the long hair trailing unconfined far below her waist, — recognized her with a sudden leap upward of my heart into my throat. There was no semblance of fear, only undisguised amazement, in the dark gray eyes that met mine.

" What — what is the meaning of this strange intrusion ? Are you a member of the crew ? "

Instantly my cap came off, the thought occurring to

me of what a rough figure I must be making in my soaked jacket, with the glistening peak of my cap shadowing my face.

"No, madame;" and I bowed before her. "I am not one of your crew. My — my entrance here was entirely a mistake."

She leaned forward, one white hand grasping the back of her chair, the expression in her eyes changing as she read my face, perplexity merging into faint recollection.

"I — I do not quite comprehend," she confessed at last, changing her speech to a slightly broken Spanish. "You — you are Señor Estevan?"

CHAPTER VIII

IN WHICH I BEGIN DISCOVERY

STUNNED by this abrupt disclosure of the extremely dangerous predicament we were in, I found no immediate voice for reply, merely standing there as if petrified, staring at them both, cap in hand, grasping the edge of the door. Their faces swam before me in the gray light streaming through the stern ports; the maid already attempting a smile, as though her fears had subsided, the mistress viewing me in wondering perplexity. She it was who first succeeded in breaking the embarrassing silence.

"But, señor, what does this all mean? Why are you here, on board the yacht?"

With strong effort at control I brought my senses together, desperately fronting the disagreeable situation, feeling myself scarcely less a victim than she. If all that I now dimly suspected proved true, about us both were being drawn the cords of treachery.

"I can not explain, madame," I began lamely enough. "At least not until I comprehend the situation better myself than I do now. It is all dark. I have reason to believe a most serious mistake has been made — one it will be very difficult to rectify. Perhaps I could see more clearly if you would consent to answer a few questions. May I ask them of you?"

She bent her head slightly, still gazing directly at me with widely open eyes in which I read increasing bewilderment. I believe she thought me a crazed man, whom she must continue to humor.

"What vessel is this?"

"The steam-yacht *Sea Queen*, of Liverpool, owned by Lord Darlington," she announced soberly, her face and lips white.

"How came you anchored off the government docks?"

"By special permission of the Presidente. We were towed into that berth early last evening, after the *Esmeralda* had been hauled up against the quay to ship armament and stores."

I drew a deep breath, clenching and unclenching my hands.

"Could you tell me if it was known to others that you contemplated anchoring there?"

She hesitated, her lips slightly apart, one hand pressed against her temple.

"It is most important that I learn the exact truth," I urged earnestly. "I ask from no idle curiosity."

"I am not generally consulted in such matters, señor," she admitted, "but I believe we had been waiting several days for the opportunity to take that position. We contemplated remaining in Valparaiso some time, and, in that open roadstead, the anchorage off the government docks is considered especially safe. This is as I have been told. Beyond doubt our purpose was known quite generally among the crew and certain government officials."

She seemed to be awaiting my explanation, striving to

be courteous, yet with her impatience slightly evidenced by the continual tapping of her foot on the rug. But I was not yet through with my questioning.

"Were no officers left on board last night?"

Her gray eyes widened.

"Certainly yes; the first officer and the engineer were in charge when I retired. The others, with the majority of the crew, had gone ashore at sundown to enjoy the fun. But why do you ask, señor? Are these not on board now?"

"I regret being compelled to answer no. Only the engineer, three of the harbor watch, and some Kanaka firemen have been found. I have discovered no trace of the first officer."

"Then — then he must have rowed ashore with two of the men!" she exclaimed.

"How chanced you to be left here alone?"

She hesitated, her hands clasped on the chair-back, her bosom rising and falling tremulously. Yet finally she forced her lips to reply, as though thus seeking the quickest way of clarifying the situation.

"We were all invited to the palace of the Presidente, to listen to the speeches and view the fireworks. Lord Darlington was greatly interested, and most desirous of attending. The unfortunate scene which occurred at the hotel early in the evening left me, however, with so severe a headache that I begged to be allowed to remain here alone with Celeste. At first both Lord Darlington and mamma refused to depart without me, but when the Presidente despatched his own steam-launch to convey the party to the wharf, they decided

it would be most discourteous not to attend. Lord Darlington's membership in the House of Lords gives him a certain official recognition abroad which he does not care to have lapse. The yacht's captain accompanied them, and no dream of evil befalling those left behind ever occurred to any one of us. O señor, tell me, what does it all mean? What has happened?"

Her growing fear, the depth of emotion displayed as she held forth her hands pleadingly, left me no longer excuse for silence.

"I presume I must explain," I said regretfully, "although it is not an easy task by any means. You will have confidence in me, Miss Doris?"

"I shall endeavor to do so," she returned, an increasing coldness in her voice. "But I am Lady Darlington."

"Your pardon; I supposed you to be that gentleman's daughter."

The color swept in a wave of rich crimson into her cheeks, the gray eyes becoming darker.

"Nevertheless, señor, I am Lord Darlington's wife."

Even in that moment of embarrassment and perplexity, when I was scarcely less agitated than herself, this unexpected announcement of such a relationship came to me as a shock. Why it should, what difference it could possibly make, I did not in the least realize, yet I was instantly conscious of the disappointment, of deep regret. The revelation, thus calmly, proudly made, was so unexpected, so destructive of all my previous conceptions, as to seem an impossibility. Could this young, clear-eyed woman be indeed the wife of that grim, inactive, ancient peer of the realm? The

very thought caused me to feel sick from sudden disgust at such a misalliance, and, beyond doubt, something of this inner feeling exhibited itself plainly enough in the expression of my face. Her head straightened proudly, though the flush deserted her cheeks, leaving them white as marble.

"You apparently question the truth of my words," she remarked, coldly observant.

"It was only the natural surprise of a moment, Lady Darlington," I hastened to apologize. "The thought of your marriage had never before occurred to me."

She looked directly into my eyes, her own plainly indignant, yet her words strove to overcome the bluntness of my speech.

"I do not feel, señor, that there can be any necessity for discussing my private affairs with you at present. Enough that I am Lady Darlington, and that I have patiently answered the rather impudent questions you have seen fit to ask. Now, Señor Estevan, kindly enlighten me as to the cause of your intrusion into this apartment, and your presence on board the yacht."

Her tone had changed to imperiousness. This was plainly a command, and, back of the fair face fronting me, I read strength of character and a proud insistence long accustomed to control. Whatever the lingering sense of gratitude for the services rendered the evening previous which led her to treat me at first on the plane of social equality, it had already largely passed away. I was now an intruder, an adventurer, and to be considered only as such. It was not fear but disdain that

darkened her gray eyes. Her manner begged nothing — it pictured dominant command, the attitude of one who addresses a servant, expecting implicit obedience. The very tone of her voice stung me into resistance, into a determination to surmount the situation, and exercise my mastership.

"Lady Darlington," I began, standing directly before her, and reverting to the use of English, so as to be certain of making my meaning sufficiently clear, "whatever explanation I may make can not be pleasant, but it shall be truthful. It is far better that you comprehend fully the situation we are in, — your own peril, as well as my responsibility."

Her expression changed from arbitrary defiance to an amazement not untinged by a sudden development of fear as her hands grasped the chair-back convulsively; but I went on steadily to the end.

"I am not, as you naturally supposed, a Chilean, but a native of North America. My name is Stephens. I was in Valparaiso under most unpleasant circumstances, seeking vainly to escape from the country, and hounded by the secret police because of my connection lately with a revolutionary movement along the Bolivian frontier. The merits of that affair need not now be discussed, but I had become involved in it through certain business connections, and had attained Valparaiso after much hardship, seeking escape by sea. There I discovered every avenue closed against me, and was reduced to a desperate plight. I was in hiding from the governmental authorities when I risked almost certain discovery — last evening. A little later — after you left

the hotel — a man who I was led to believe represented the Peruvian Government, approached me with a strange proposition which, however, promised immediate release from my dangerous predicament, and likewise a suitable reward for the successful performance of a certain service. I was, as you may easily conceive, in a state of mind to grasp at straws. I am a sailor, and the particular duty required of me was to be performed upon the sea. I was asked to assume the position of a Peruvian naval captain, incapacitated by sudden illness, in the surprise and capture of a Chilean war-vessel, the steam-yacht *Esmeralda*, then supposed to be lying at anchor, poorly guarded, in the outer harbor off the government docks. The crew for this warlike enterprise had already been selected, and the plans fully developed by others; all I was expected to do was to assume command, and execute them. For that purpose I was presented with a Peruvian naval commission."

My glance wandered from the motionless woman fronting me in such white silence to Celeste, who had sunk back upon the bed, her blue eyes staring at me across the brass rail, evidently experiencing difficulty in translating my rapid English speech.

"I had enjoyed but little opportunity of examining the particular vessel we were thus employed to capture, as I dared not leave the hotel except after nightfall," I continued more slowly. "Yet I knew her place of anchorage, and that she was a steam-yacht of some seven hundred tons burden, schooner-rigged, with lines promising great speed. Otherwise I relied entirely upon the knowledge of the officers under me. We boarded what

I believed to be the *Esmeralda* soon after midnight, overcame the small harbor watch with little difficulty, captured the engine-room, and, by holding a gun at his ear, persuaded the engineer to operate his machinery in our service. The very audacity of the attempt brought comparatively easy success. The patriotic celebration in the city favored us greatly, as it left the roadstead almost totally unguarded, and we succeeded in getting safely out to sea unobserved. The main cabin had been secured by my orders when we first arrived aboard, and I came below just now, after all danger seemed far astern, to learn if any officers were hidden away here. I had examined all the other state-rooms, finding them empty, and at last opened this door in my quest. Not until I saw you did I in the slightest realize that we were on board the wrong vessel, or that we were engaged in anything except an honorable adventure of war."

That the hasty details of my story both startled her and impressed her with its truth, was evident enough, yet her lips curled with contempt, and her eyes remained unbelieving.

"How many men accompanied you?"

"A crew of twenty, with two officers."

"Peruvians, I presume?"

"No, madame," reluctantly, "a hotchpotch dragged from the Seven Seas."

Her expressive face darkened, her fingers clenching again nervously about the chair-back.

"And you really expect me to believe that preposterous tale!" she burst forth, indignation shattering all

ordinary bonds of speech. "You must, indeed, think very highly of my intelligence. You — why, you are a sea-robber, a pirate!"

My cheeks flushed to the harsh words. I could feel the surge of blood, yet I met her gaze quietly.

"I have told you the exact truth, Lady Darlington, as I promised," I returned, seeking to speak calmly, "without any real hope that you would believe. Yet I want you to try. It is all bad enough as it stands, without endeavoring to make it appear worse."

She leaned slightly forward, clearly impressed to some extent by the gravity of my manner.

"Then prove it."

"How?"

"By steaming directly back to Valparaiso, and delivering up this stolen vessel to its lawful owners."

"That sounds simple enough, but do you realize what our probable fate would be?"

She clasped her hands tightly, pressing them against her breast.

"What do I care!" the contempt in her voice grown bitter. "You have done the evil, by your own confession; now you should pay the price. You have just told me a very pretty story to account for an act of crime. You profess sorrow, and claim to be an honorable man. Very well, now prove it by the only means in your power. You rescued me once from insult, and I hold the remembrance of that act in your favor. Prove yourself worthy a woman's respect by making amends for this wrong. Take the *Sea Queen* back now, before it is forever too late, and all I can do, or that my husband can

accomplish, shall be done to save you from punishment. Prove to me that your words are not false."

I hesitated, doubt and suspicion rendering me totally incapable of clear thinking before her insistent demand. Her face grew whiter as she marked my silence.

"So you — you lied then!" the cruel words faltered from between her lips almost unconsciously.

"No, I spoke truth," I answered, gripping myself sternly, "but I question my power."

"Your power? Why, you just informed me you were in command."

I advanced a step forward, my manner respectful enough, yet she half shrank back from my approach and brought the protection of the chair between us.

"Perhaps I may never succeed in making you clearly comprehend my present position," I said soberly, "yet I intend to try, because, in truth, I need your assistance as greatly as you need mine. Twenty minutes ago, Lady Darlington, it was true I believed myself to be in absolute command of this vessel. Now I gravely suspect whether I may not be a mere puppet, helpless in the hands of others. I do not know this, but it appears probable. As I have already endeavored to explain, it was comparatively easy for me to mistake this yacht for the *Esmeralda*. They are very much alike, and I had enjoyed no opportunity for closely observing either. But it is impossible for me to conceive how the others of my party could have innocently made such an error. What project they may have had in mind I can not even guess, but I believe now the *Sea Queen* was deliberately captured, and that I have been decoyed into the leadership

of an act of piracy. If so, then I am only one man pitted against twenty. What I may accomplish I have at present no means of knowing. I must see the others, endeavor to discover their secret purpose, and learn whether or not I possess any real authority on board. Lady Darlington, do you at least comprehend what I mean? Do I make it clear to you that I am in a position scarcely less perilous than your own?"

With lips parted and hands clenched over her heaving breast she stood silent, apparently deeply aroused by my earnest appeal, yet totally unable to repose full confidence in me. Yet her very hesitancy was to me an encouragement.

"You certainly have every reason to doubt me at present, madame," I urged with increased confidence, "yet I mean to prove myself worthy your trust by deeds rather than words. Will you consent to do as I wish, at least for the moment?"

She did not appear to know what she had better do or say, her glance wandering in uncertainty from my face to the questioning eyes of the maid. The latter leaned forward with some eagerness.

"Surely it is best to say *oui*, madame; ze man has ze look honorable," her hands gesticulating despair. "An' on ze whol' ship zere was no one else to help us."

"As you say, Celeste, there is no choice;" and Lady Darlington's gray eyes again sought mine reluctantly. "I sincerely desire to repose complete confidence in you, to believe you worthy. What is it you wish us to do?"

I was struck by the sudden lifelessness of her tone, yet this was no time for me to relinquish my purpose.

" Merely to remain where you are, beyond the observation of others, until I can ascertain the exact truth of our situation. So soon as I learn this, I shall return with the information. Will you accede to this?"

She lowered her head slightly, in silent acquiescence, and, still facing them both, I backed out of the room and closed the door.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH I LEARN OUR PORT

I SANK down into the depths of an upholstered divan without, rested my head within my hands, and endeavored earnestly to collect thought and nerve for the coming struggle. The terribleness of our situation only became more apparent as I considered it in the light of the discoveries already made, and in my understanding of the nature of those with whom I was now associated. Neither Tuttle nor De Nova had ever mistaken the *Sea Queen* for the warship *Esmeralda*. It was impossible to conceive that these two trained seamen could have made such an error, or that the men under them could have been so utterly deceived. However alike in general outline the two vessels may have been, sailors, having ample opportunity to observe both, would have certainly detected the difference, even amid the blackest night shadows. Tuttle's boat came up directly beneath the bows, with the riding lamps burning brightly and revealing the name; every man aboard must have seen it plainly. Yet what object could have led to so desperate an act of piracy? What part was I destined to play in the final working out of their lawless scheme? Why, by means of lies and forged documents, had they dragged me into their foul conspiracy? Why had they placed me temporarily in command of their ill-gotten prize?

The longer I studied over the problem the more thoroughly did I become mystified and confused. What could these men ever hope to accomplish in this lawless fashion? They must be fools or madmen. This was not the age of piracy; every league of sea was patrolled; every port protected by telegraphic communication. Where could they sail? Where could they expect to land? Where on all the round globe could they hope to go to escape the vengeance of British power on the high seas? I must be dreaming, for surely no men in their senses would expect to commit such a crime and get off scott free. I stared about on the rich furnishings of the cabin, thus arousing myself to the knowledge that this was no fantasy, but a deliberate fact. Then what could be their purpose, their plan? What object could possibly inspire them to so reckless an act?

Difficult as my own situation undoubtedly was, apparently helpless among this crew of sea devils, without a man on board in whom I could put trust, it was rendered a thousand times harder by the presence of those two women. In what way could I protect and serve them? I wondered if all the crew forward were in the plot, or were the leaders alone involved? Could I count on finding a single honest sailor in all that riffraff who would stand by me in revolt? There were others on board, — the three seamen and the engineer of the yacht's crew, the Chilean officer captured on shore, — but they were prisoners, far more helpless even than myself. The longer I thought the darker grew the prospect, the closer the cords of Fate pressed about me. There was nothing to do except to face the conspirators boldly,

and thus ascertain the whole truth. I glanced upward at the telltale compass overhead — the vessel's course had already been altered : we were now headed westward, directly out into the broad Pacific.

The denser clouds of low-lying fog were drifting southward, leaving the sea to starboard almost free of vapor, although a dim haze yet obscured the horizon. The swell was sufficiently heavy to send white wreaths of spray flashing across the forecastle rail, yet the yacht was still being pressed through the water at full speed. At intervals I could discern the mad whirling of her screw as the stern was flung high into the air by some racing wave. I met Tuttle at the end of the bridge, clinging to the handrail, his oilskins flapping in the head wind. He never glanced toward me, the cool, studied insolence of the fellow causing me to feel more deeply than ever before his consciousness of power.

"The yacht is several points off her course, Mr. Tuttle," I said sharply, determined to test him. "May I ask if the change was made by your order?"

He swept one long arm toward the north, and, following the direction of his finger, I dimly perceived a spiral of black smoke barely visible above the horizon.

"I thought we had better sheer off, as there was no guessing who that fellow yonder might prove to be."

I remained silent, watching the distant smudge, and occasionally glancing aside into his imperturbable face. He yawned sleepily.

"I rather guess one of us had better turn in, Mr. Stephens," he suggested finally, "for we'll have to arrange about our watches aft."

"Presently, Mr. Tuttle; we have n't breakfasted yet. Meanwhile I should prefer to understand matters a little more clearly. I 've just been through the cabins. None of the yacht's officers are on board."

I could see his thin lips drawn back in a sinister grin, which revealed his yellow teeth.

"The Lord helpeth those who help themselves," he returned piously, uprolling his eyes. "The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong."

"I also discovered," I went on, angered by such abominable cant, "that this vessel we have captured is not the Chilean *Esmeralda* at all, but the yacht *Sea Queen*, owned by Lord Darlington, and flying the English flag."

"The hell you say."

"Moreover, I have not the slightest doubt that you knew it from the first. Now I demand some explanation, Mr. Tuttle. What does this mean?"

He stood leaning back against the rail facing me, the disagreeable grin gone from his lips, his half-closed eyes glinting uneasily.

"Well, what of it?"

"Only that we have committed an act of piracy. Every naval vessel of the civilized world will be used to hunt us down. We shall not be safe on any sea, nor able to land in any port of the globe. If we resist we shall be blown out of the water; if captured, our crime means death. You have deliberately decoyed me into this affair for some secret purpose of your own; you have involved me in your crime, and now I insist upon some knowledge of your plan, and an explanation regarding my future authority on board."

"Oh, you are the captain," sneeringly. "What more can you want?"

"Then, if I am, we will head directly back to Valparaiso."

"Oh, I rather guess not;" and Tuttle's eyes became instantly hard and ugly. "Nevertheless you're captain all right, just so long as you keep the nose of the old girl pointed the way we want her to go."

"That is it, is it?"

"Yes, that's exactly the ticket."

I turned partially aside, glancing toward the wheelman. The fellow was leaning forward over the spokes, evidently deeply interested in our controversy and endeavoring to hear all we had to say. Tuttle followed the direction of my eyes, but with apparent indifference.

"Oh, they all understand about it," he remarked carelessly. "And now I guess maybe it's about time we gave you the main points to chew on. I was in hopes we'd push the old hooker another hundred miles or so out into the briny before you began to get wise, but after all it don't make very much difference. If you'll step down into the chart-house, Mr. Stephens, I'll fetch some things I want to show you, an' be along myself in a jiffy. Then I'll spin a yarn that'll cause you to come with us willin' enough, or else you're a dam' fool."

There was nothing else to do, and I followed him down the bridge steps to the main-deck. The chart-house had its single door opening aft, and was a small, plainly built structure painted a dingy gray, with two narrow windows on either side, and just enough space within to contain a deal table, locker, and three rude

benches. I sat down upon one of these, filled and lighted my pipe, and waited in silence, gazing idly at the chart pinned flat on the table. It was a map of these waters lying off to the Chilean coast, and a vessel's course had been pricked upon it from Juan Fernandez to Valparaiso. This did not particularly interest me, and my thought drifted naturally to the woman impatiently awaiting my return in the cabin. What a distressing situation for one of Lady Darlington's birth and refinement! And yet with what dignity of manner had she met the unexpected! It was plain to be seen that hers was a heart of courage, not easily broken under adversity. Beneath the pride of her words and action I had caught glimpses of the true woman. No doubt she had broken down utterly after I left the cabin, yet she would rally again, and greet me with the same calm insistence which was the heritage of her nature and breeding.

And how could I hope to serve her? What would this crew of hell-hounds, these merciless sea-wolves, permit me to do? Trans-ship them upon some passing vessel? Put into some isolated island port? This was scarcely likely, for either act would involve the danger of an exposure they would be little inclined to assume. I comprehended already that it would be according to their decision, and not mine. I had been plainly informed how little my control extended over their desires. And whither were we bound? into what strange seas? into what species of wild adventure? The utter impossibility of keeping those two concealed below for any length of time was clearly evident. Ship life was far

too restricted. Both Tuttle and De Nova would naturally expect to lodge aft, and it was a privilege they could not easily be denied. Yet what would they say, how would they act, when they finally discovered these two unwilling passengers aboard? What was my duty in all the circumstances? Was it to stand clear of the whole affair, utterly refusing to have any further part in it? Or should I continue in outward command, watched, domineered over, hampered, yet at the same time exercising some slight authority, until I could perceive a possible way to escape the toils? Was it not better to be even partially free than to be locked helplessly below? In any event what did the conspirators want me for? What special part was I destined to play in the future unfolding of their nefarious scheme? It was all a deep, unsolvable mystery, yet out of its mist constantly floated the appealing face of that woman awaiting me below. I could not desert her. I could not consider anything except how I might best serve her interests, best protect her from the contamination of this hell afloat.

Their shadows suddenly darkened the doorway, and Tuttle, accompanied by De Nova and the big seaman named Bill Anderson, entered. The second officer nodded to me in genial fashion, his white teeth gleaming, but Anderson slouched surlily past and dropped heavily on a bench, his coarse bull-dog features devoid of all expression, his square jaws munching the tobacco in his cheek. I took notice of his eyes, staring straight out of the window opposite, dull, dog-like, deeply sunken under thatched brows, his skin like brown leather drawn tight, his short red neck, and gnarled hands. Altogether

he appeared a repulsive brute, no more easily subdued than a jungle tiger. Tuttle sidled along to the opposite side of the table, upon which he placed a tightly rolled, yellowish-backed paper, evidently a navigating chart. No one spoke as he deliberately unrolled this from its fastenings and spread it out above the other, tacking the four corners down flat. A glance revealed to me the open water of the southern ocean.

How the details of that simple scene abide in memory! The heaving stretch of sullen green water visible through the open door; the single ray of sunlight streaming in at the port window, barely touching Anderson's cotton shirt-sleeve, and extending across the table like a golden arrow; the bare, rough interior, the roof-beam charred black above the single lamp; De Nova lolling back in one corner, his dark eyes glistening with cheerfulness, his short, black moustaches upcurled, a cigarette smouldering between his brown fingers; Anderson scowling at the dead wall, his bestial face seeming to rest directly between his shoulders; and Tuttle, with head bare, revealing his thin hair plastered down, his long, cadaverous face, seamed by deep wrinkles, his emaciated body encased in a rusty old frock coat, looking like a backwoods preacher as he leaned over the outspread map. As I watched him curiously, he suddenly pressed the point of his thumb down upon the paper.

"There 's our first port, Mr. Stephens," he announced dogmatically. "There, where you see that red cross."

I bent over, startled out of all assumed indifference as I studied the position indicated.

"Longitude 110° 30′ West, and Latitude 66° 17′ South!" I exclaimed, scarcely crediting either ears or eyes. "Why, good God, man, that is almost upon the Antarctic Circle!"

He nodded, running his long fingers through his thin hair.

"Right you are, sir. I guess there won't be no warships a-trailin' after us down in them latitudes; not at this season of the year."

"But there's nothing there!" and I continued staring incredulously at the map. "Nothing but fog and floating ice. There is no land marked within five hundred miles."

"Just the same there's land there," he retorted positively, his thin lips pressed together. "I've seen it; two islands, an' that's where the *Sea Queen* pokes her nose."

I could merely sit back, staring at the fellow, who remained leaning both hands on the table, his glinting eyes on my face.

"It's a rum yarn, Mr. Stephens, I'll admit," he said slowly, his nasal tone much in evidence, "but it's all true, sir, so help me, God! Here's the straight of it, an' you listen quiet till I get done. Then I'll answer your questions as long as you've got any to ask."

CHAPTER X

IN WHICH I HEAR THE TALE OF THE FIRST OFFICER

TUTTLE required a while getting started, pulling aside his dangling coat-tails to sit down facing me, and then twiddling his long fingers with his gaze bent on the deck. I take it that his intellectual operations were naturally slow, although he was swift enough in all matters appertaining to seamanship. Anyway, he sat there for so long, his whole appearance so sleek and oily, that I lost all patience, shuffling my feet on the deck. The noise served to arouse him.

"It commenced somethin' like over two years ago, sir," he began, mouthing each word with care, "a little earlier in the season than this is now. I was master of the whalin' bark *Betsy*, sailin' from Provincetown, an' we were homeward bound after about eighteen months' cruisin' in the South Pacific, carryin' a fair cargo of oil an' whale trimmings. We were roundin' the Horn, being about 70° West and 56° South when the real trouble began. I know that was rather a low latitude, but we had been buckin' against head winds an' a high sea for more 'n a week, an' besides were short-handed, five of the crew havin' skipped out at Somers Island, where we put in after fresh water. Anyway, it was about there that a storm hit us from

out the nor'east. I guess it must have been one end of a hurricane. I never see nothin' fiercer, even in those seas. We had no time to gather in all our canvas, bein' short-handed as we was, an' I thought for a bit the ol' *Betsy* was goin' to turn turtle. As it was we lost our fore-topmast, two of the boats, an' the cook's galley went overboard, with the cook an' a boy inside. Anyhow, there was nothin' to do but turn tail an' scud, the ropes and canvas being so stiff the men could n't budge 'em, an' the whole deck a-glitter with ice. Well, we battened down, an' took chances, but for a while I thought every wave was goin' to do for the ol' hooker an' send us all to Davy Jones'. We had two men lashed to the wheel, an' we had to cut 'em loose with axes every few minutes. That was the sort o' storm we was runnin' against. I could n't see five feet from the rail, an' I had to keep diggin' ice out o' my eyes to see at all. The wind had the feel of a solid wall, sir."

He stopped, gazing silently out through the door, apparently recalling to memory those scenes of struggle.

"It was four days an' nights that blame' storm howled down from the nor'east, and when it finally just naturally blew out, we was pretty well down among the icebergs, ridin' as ugly a sea as ever I want to witness. It seemed to me them waves was every one of 'em fifty feet high, an' they looked yaller they was so angry, with the sky comin' right down on the crest of 'em. Lord, but the ol' *Betsy* did dance some, an' when we shot down into a hollow with them solid walls o' water risin' up all around, it was like lookin' up out o' hell, let me tell you. Well, just 's soon as the wind died out, the fog come

creepin' down on us from off the ice, an' there we swung up an' down, all hemmed in, like we had a room all to ourselves. The ol' *Betsy* never was much on beauty, but by now she was a fright. Her bowsprit was broken an' dangling, her forward bulwarks smashed even with the deck, the mainsail blown clean out like it was ripped with a knife, an' the decks awash with every roll. But we ran life-lines, got busy, every man Jack of us, and finally had the old hooker fairly shipshape after a fashion. But all this time I never got any observation because of the thick weather. I knew the drift had been fierce, but I could n't a-guessed within five hundred mile of where it landed us. Anyhow, there was nothin' to do but stand by and get our rig up for another shindy, but it was a blame' risky proposition with all them icebergs loomin' up through the fog, and the waves poundin' against 'em. But we had to rig canvas and cut away the riffle, before the bark would steer so that we dared face it.

"We 'd swung her round by the next mornin'; an' along about noon the sun showed red as fire through the vapor, an' I caught our bearings. We was right there, sir, Longitude 110° 30′ West, an' Latitude 66° 17′ South, our course bein' at the time nor'west-by-nor'. I was down in the cabin figurin' it all out, when somebody yelled sudden from the crow's nest. I did n't hear what he said, but the mate shoved his head down the companion, and reported land on the weather-bow. I took a glance at the chart an' made for the deck, thinkin' the fellers must be crazy; for, as you just said, sir, the map did n't show anything but water till you hit

up Dougherty Island, a matter of five hundred miles or more. But I had n't more 'n climbed to the poop when I saw it so dam' plain that I just stood there starin'. It could n't 'a' been more 'n a mile away from us, the bank o' fog breakin' free from it, an' leavin' the whole shore-line spread out like a picture in a frame. Say, it was n't a bad thing to look at, only it appeared almighty savage; an' besides, the way the wind was I was n't so sure we 'd go clear. That first island was so girted with ice that at first sight I tried to imagine that was all it was, just a lot o' floatin' hummocks, maybe an iceberg upset. But when I got the glasses out I could see the black rocks all right sticking out irregular here and there. I could n't pay much attention to the display just then, as the drift seemed to be pullin' us straight down onto the upper headland. A big lot o' ice allers seems to do that, and, owin' to the way we was clogged up around the bows, the *Betsy* did n't mind her helm none too good. But finally her head began to pay off slowly, an' I felt reasonable sure we was goin' to sail clear.

"Say, Mr. Stephens, that was a sight for a seafarin' man to remember, an' I hung onto the wheel, helpin' the feller steerin' to jam her hard over, an' took it all in. That island was just plum encased solid in ice, with nothin' but them few black points o' rock stickin' up through the centre o' it. It was all jest one blue-green glitter, an' there must have been more 'n thirty feet of height to it, sometimes raisin' straight up like a solid wall, an' sometimes slantin' an' full o' caves. It was wonderful the way the light danced an' played along the surface, an' how them big surges dashed up against the

front, an' hurled spray in great white clouds seemingly clear up to the sky. There was a look o' hell about it too; everything so lonesome, an' cold, an' desolate. Somehow it made me shiver. Well, sir, I was still starin' at it, not notin' anything in particular, but just fascinated by havin' that sort o' picture pop out o' the sea that way, when the mate let go of the rail he was hangin' onto, an' came scuddin' down toward me, pointing, and bawlin', 'For the Lord's sake, sir, but ain't that a real ship a-stranded up yonder?'"

Tuttle was leaning forward now, his elbows on the table. His lean, solemn countenance had lost its listlessness, and I also noticed the eager interest imprinted on the faces of his two comrades.

"We was jest roundin' the point," he went on as soon as he took a long breath, "the *Betsy* keelin' over so's her deck was half awash, an' with no more than maybe a hundred yards o' clear water to the good. Back o' that ugly lookin' headland the coast seemed to fall away sudden into a sort o' cove, which was piled high with great ice hummocks, behind which the ice wall rose up sheer almost to the top o' the rocks. There was a sorter shelf along the edge of it, an', a-settin' up there in full view was the damndest lookin' vessel ever I saw in fifty years o' seafarin'. So help me, God, sir, I saw it with my own eyes, as plain as I 'm lookin' at you! It was h'isted up all o' twenty feet above the lower ice-field, an' sort o' careened over where it was froze fast so as to show the deck amidships clear to the inner rail. You remember them ships what Columbus sailed in? Well, this hooker was that kind, only a blame' sight bigger. I

guessed her at eight hundred and fifty or nine hundred ton, but she had the same sort o' build — a big high stern, with an after-cabin clear acrost it, the waist sunk down in a curve, an' the fo'castle raised up like a house, with blunt bows, an' a monster bowsprit forkin' straight up into the air. This last had been broke off, however, an' the only mast that showed stood in a splinter, maybe thirty feet high. The whole outfit was so cased with ice an' glittered so in the sun that it seemed like a part o' the ice cliff, which had took that queer shape from thawin' an' freezin'. Damme if I did n't think it was somethin' like that for a minute, — a blame' freak o' nature, — but when I grabbed the glasses, an' got a good look through them, it was a ship all right, the kind you read about in the books what navigated these waters a hundred or more years ago. I was still a-starin' at it with all my eyes when we raised the stern, which stood h'isted up a bit higher than the bow, an' where the steady dash of the waves did n't break clean over it, an' the sun fell just right so I read the hooker's name. By God, I did, sir! It was there plain as day: *Donna Isabel, Cadiz.*"

The change in the man speaking held me breathless; his cant, his usually oily method of utterance had merged into an earnestness full of fascination. True or false, an hallucination or a fact, he firmly believed every word he spoke, and I could not remain unmoved by his eager simplicity.

"Well, that was about all, sir," his voice sinking back into commonplace. "In two hours we was out o' sight, an' feelin' our way through a blindin' snow squall. But

it was such a rum thing, discoverin' them islands out there all uncharted, with that queer ghost ship perchin' on 'em, that I wrote down the latitude an' longitude an' the hooker's name in my log-book. We was about three weeks makin' the West Falklands, where I shipped a few more hands, an' then bore away north for home."

He drew a plug of tobacco from out his coat-tail pocket, cut off what he needed, and stowed it away in his cheek. He ran his fingers through his thin hair, and resumed:

"About eighteen months later I was back with the ol' *Betsy* in the South Pacific. One night, with the moon shinin', hardly a ripple anywhere, my mate run her nose onto a rock, a couple o' hundred miles south o' Easter Island, an' in less than twenty minutes the bark had gone down like a stone. We made Easter Island in the boats without much trouble, but it wa'n't so easy to get away. I had six weeks of it before I got a chance, an' then I shipped afore the mast on a sandalwood trader. De Nova here was mate, an' finally, huntin' goods to peddle among the islanders, we sailed into Valparaiso, an' the most of us shipped out. Well, by that time I was n't thinkin' very often about that ice-ship down in the Antar'tic; I was hustlin' for some sort o' berth to take me back to the States. But one night, down in Rodrigues' back room, where I hung out, I got to talkin' with a gambler named Francisco — the same smooth duck who introduced himself as De Castillo to you, sir. He was an educated man, an' seemed to like to hear me talk, an' among other sea yarns I happened to tell him this one. He seemed mighty interested,

although he was n't never given to seafarin', an' asked me a whole pile o' fool questions. Finally he wanted to meet me again alone the next day.

"Well, havin' nothin' better to do, I was there when he came, an' he showed up with a queer-lookin', big, ol' book, the cover half ripped off, under his arm. Then he made me tell him that yarn over again, and describe the ship jest exactly as I remembered it. It beat all, the questions that feller asked, an' he stumped me more 'n once. Then, when I 'd got through, an' told him everything I could dig out o' my memory, he opened up that book o' his on the table, an' damme, sir, if he did n't show me a picture of that same ol' hooker, plain as life, only everything was trim an' shipshape on board, with the masts up an' the sails drawin'. The name was printed underneath too — *Donna Isabel, Cadiz.*

"That book he showed me was printed in Spanish,— not just like what you see to-day, sir, but the letterin' all rough, as though it had been cut out o' wood, but the fellow showed me the date when it was printed, an' it read 'Seville, 1779,' plain enough. Of course I could n't make out the Spanish, only maybe a word here an' there, but Francisco explained it was one of a series of Government documents got out by what he called the Maritime Office (which is somethin' to do with the sea, I guess) relatin' to Spanish merchant-ships employed by the Government; I don't know anything about it, but that 's what he said. Anyhow, the book was old, all right. Francisco wrote out in English what he said was printed there about this *Donna Isabel;* an' there it is, sir, in his own handwritin'."

He took the paper out of his inner coat pocket and spread it open on the table before us. De Nova and Anderson leaned forward eagerly to look at it, but Tuttle shoved it along toward me.

"Read it out loud, sir," he said, his voice trembling. The writing was not clear, and I held it up to the light.

"*Galleon Donna Isabel, ship-rigged, 950 tons, Amador, Master, built 1730, home port Cadiz. Sailed Guayaquil for Valencia, June 11, 1753; crew numbered 32, passengers 17, including 5 women; carried treasure, in gold ingots and pieces of eight, valued at three million pesos, consigned by Candamo, presidente, to Department of the West, receipted for by Salvatore, Government Agent. Spoken by Ship Conquistador, Sanchez, Master, July 16, 1753, 80° 20' W. and 47° 15' S; all well. Lost at sea; no report.*"

I put down the paper, and looked across at Tuttle; he sat motionless, his head in his hands. I confess the tale had affected me strangely, and I could not doubt that the man honestly believed every word he had uttered. Yet it was far too marvellous ever to be true; too impossible; too wildly romantic. That a stanch vessel, locked securely in the ice, absolutely protected by its impenetrable covering, amid the changeless atmosphere of the grim Antarctic, might survive for more than a hundred years, was in itself not entirely unbelievable. Moreover, I knew and had witnessed marvels of the sea scarcely less miraculous than such a resurrection. But, I could not bring my sceptical mind to any clear realization of this vague dream. It must have been an hallucination, an optical illusion born from a mirage of fog and sun in those frozen seas. Over three million *pesos*,

locked within the eternal ice for one hundred and twenty-six years! Over three million *pesos*, guarded by the dead for a century amid that grim desolation of crested sea! God! it was simply unthinkable, and I even ventured to smile at the credulity of the men about me; yet I did it with set jaws and lips parched and dry. It was a hoax somewhere, either on the part of Tuttle, or Francisco. Still, what had either worthy to gain by such a lie? What purpose, other than the one he stated, could have driven this hard-headed whaleman into an act of piracy? could have started him forth upon so perilous a voyage into that stormy ocean? What if it was all true? I felt the blood boiling up through my veins, every extremity tingling with the fever of it. Over three million *pesos!* Merciful Mother! it was the ransom of a king: it was the temptation of hell! I know not how I controlled my voice so as to question calmly, for, even as I first spoke, I noticed how my hands trembled where they rested on the outspread map.

"Is that all?"

Tuttle nodded his head, uplifting his eyes questioningly to mine.

"That 's the whole of it, sir. What do you think?"

"That 's more than I know, Mr. Tuttle. Perhaps you dreamed, perhaps Francisco lied. I should have liked to see that book."

I bent lower over the chart, staring at the red cross.

"What was it you men wanted me for?"

"To operate the steamer, sir; the rest of us aboard only understand sailin' vessels."

"Yes, of course; but why did you happen to choose

a steamer for the job? There were plenty of sailing craft lying in the harbor easier to steal than this yacht."

"Very true, but it happened to be steam power we wanted. Here is about how we figured it, sir. First place, we had to get away quickly out of those portions of the sea where they 'd be most likely to hunt for us. We 're outlaws, an' every ship sailin' under a flag is an enemy. Every British war vessel in the Pacific, an' there 's a slue of 'em, will be tryin' to round us up just so soon as the cables get workin'. More than likely some of 'em are burnin' coal already. Well, sir, what chance would a sailin' vessel have in such a chase? We needed somethin' that would show 'em a clean pair o' heels — somethin' that would give 'em a run for their money. That 's what this yacht can do; she 's pokin' it now at sixteen."

"Yes; you 've got the advantage," I confessed, "so long as your coal lasts. But you can't put in anywhere for a new supply — what then?"

He turned partially about, and winked at De Nova; the fellow grinned back at him, but burst in eagerly:

"Oh, we 're not quite so green as all zat, monsieur Stephens, an' I t'ink we got zis t'ing plan' out jus' 'bout right. We steam so till we get maybe far 'nough South w'ere zey quit look for us. How it be 130° West an' 40° South? Nobody t'ink we go zere — *non, non.* We got coal plenty for zat, an' zen have bunch left. I know; I try it. No more need push her eizer after we leave ze Fernandez — we be well ahead zen. Zen we rig up ze schooner sails, an' make ze next t'ousan' mile wizout burn' a poun'. You see how it do? Ze

danjaire was not, for in zat ocean we meet nossing but maybe ze whale ship."

"You understand what he means, sir?" went on Tuttle, as the creole paused for breath. "Once well ahead we can fall back on canvas, and save the coal. But we'll need the steam power down there to hold her off an' on by the island while we do the job. It's a mighty nasty bit o' water, an' a sailin' vessel is apt to get pinched in the ice. But with a steamer we can hold her to it, however the wind blows."

I looked at the fellow with greater respect. Evidently he had considered every angle of the desperate game he was playing.

"Your scheme certainly sounds reasonable enough," I admitted, almost reluctantly. "And the chances are you will get there all right. But suppose you do; suppose you discover this mysterious island; suppose you find there the galleon as you say; suppose you even succeed in getting aboard, and into possession of the treasure — what then? Don't you know you're bound to be caught the minute you come out of the Antarctic into any ocean patrolled by the fleets of the world? Don't you know there isn't a port anywhere on the Seven Seas into which you can take the *Sea Queen* without immediate discovery and arrest? You have committed piracy — a crime against the nations — and the civilized world will unite to hunt you down."

"That's another reason why we had to have a steamer," he explained calmly. "You just remarked that they'd all be lookin' for the *Sea Queen* to come back. Well, let 'em look; they won't never see her,

"HE jerked his sheath-knife from his belt, and, with one fierce lunge, drove it half to the hilt into the table."

sir. Once we get that gold under hatches, an' back as far as that rock they call Dougherty Island — an' that 's only a run o' maybe five hundred miles — I 'll engage to make over this here *Sea Queen* so that her own Captain would n't know her fifty feet away. How? I 'd strip the engines out o' her, h'ist the stack overboard, tear down the bridge an' wheelhouse, rig her as a barkentine, change every line o' paint fore an' aft, an' then wreck her somewhere along the east Patagonian coast, or maybe the Falklands. It would be nothin' but a bloomin' whaler gone ashore, an' afore anybody finds out different, we 'll be scattered to hell an' back."

I was obliged to acknowledge to myself that it was not an impossible plan. Eliminating the chance of accident or some unusually bad luck, success appeared not only possible, but probable.

"Did you think all that out yourself, Mr. Tuttle?"

"Well, Francisco suggested considerable, but we did it together."

"Where is he? on board?"

The mate laughed, his eyes expressive of contempt.

"Not much, he had n't the nerve. He 's a schemer all right, but a blame' coward."

"But suppose he gets to talking back there in Valparaiso?"

It was big Bill Anderson who answered me, disgusted with our long controversy.

"Oh, to hell wid Francisco!" he broke in gruffly. "It 's w'at you 're goin' to do we want to know. Francisco 'll hold his gaff well enough. He expects a bit of the swag, an' besides, I let him know what was comin'

to him if he let his tongue wag. I had him right, let me tell ye. An', damme, Mr. Stephens," the bully in him breaking all bounds, "if it ain't comin' the same way to any other duffer who goes back on us this trip. That's what talks!" He jerked his sheath-knife from his belt, and, with one fierce lunge, drove it half to the hilt into the table, his brute eyes scowling threateningly into mine.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH I EXPLAIN TO HER LADYSHIP

I GAZED directly into his bullying eyes with a depth of contempt I made no slightest effort to disguise. Then I arose deliberately to my feet.

"Anderson, pluck that knife out, and put it back in your belt."

"I 'm damned if—"

"Do as I say quick, you surly brute," I interrupted sternly. "Not another word. I 'm in command here yet, and you 'll obey orders, or I 'll make you."

He understood I meant it, with his innate cowardice plainly apparent, yet did not yield until Tuttle interfered with a sarcastic laugh.

"The captain is n't exactly the sort to be handled in that kind o' way, Bill," he said smoothly. "He 's a deep-water sailor, not a land-shark, but I guess he 's likely ready enough by this time to say what he 's willin' to do."

The entire situation seemed to unroll before me like a panorama as I stood there, hastily making up my mind for action. I was afloat on the high seas, absolutely powerless to resist the set purpose of these men surrounding me, all rendered desperate by greed. Much as I despised Anderson, I comprehended that his threat was no idle one; nor did I possess a single comrade on

board who would stand at my back. I was utterly alone; nay, worse even than alone — with two women dependent upon me. If I outwardly agreed with these rascals, and thus retained semblance of command over them, I might possibly preserve all our lives; I could, at least for the present, protect the women from insult, perhaps from danger. Such action would, of course, in the eyes of the world, place me in the same category as the crew, — would make me technically a pirate also, and the chances were, should we be captured I could never satisfactorily establish my innocence. I should be held equally guilty of crime. Yet it seemed to me then — and now — that I had no other choice except to cast my fortunes openly with these reckless adventurers of the sea.

"Well, Mr. Tuttle," I said quietly, "I may as well return you my answer one time as another. I don't give a tinker's damn for Anderson's threats, and I don't altogether put much faith in your yarn. But perhaps it's worth taking a chance at. What is to be my authority on board, providing I agree to go with you?"

"You're the captain."

"Absolutely in command?"

He shifted about, appearing a trifle disconcerted under my rapid questioning.

"Well, yes; in everything concernin' the discipline an' sailin' of the yacht," he explained. "There won't be no fuss about that job, sir. But we ain't a regular articled crew, bein' that we're all here on shares in the enterprise, an' so, as regards the purpose of the voyage, it'll have to be decided by majority vote. However, that don't need make no trouble."

"What is to be my share if you find the treasure?"

He thrust his head out of the window nearest him, looking up and down the deck; then he leaned across the table toward me, lowering his voice, until it was little more than a whisper.

"You get one-fifth, sir; the four of us here get one-fifth each; the other fifth is to be divided among the crew. Ain't that fair enough, sir?"

"It would appear so; yet there is still another matter of some importance to be decided first. There are two women on board; how about them?"

"What!" The vibrant excitement of his high-pitched nasal voice was echoed by the others.

"This steam-yacht we have stolen was the property of the Earl of Darlington," I explained. "Lady Darlington and her maid are still on board, in the cabin aft."

This unexpected and undesirable information seemed fairly to stun the fellows, their eyes meeting blankly. I heard Bill Anderson swear.

"The question is, how can we best dispose of them? This is no excursion for ladies, no pleasure trip of any kind, we've started on. Shall we hail some passing vessel and trans-ship them, or shall we run in to Juan Fernandez and put them both safely ashore?"

None of the three men ventured to glance toward me, and for a long moment no answering voice spoke. Then Tuttle gave oily utterance to words of compromise.

"Blame if this don't sort o' knock me all out, sir," he acknowledged. "I don't exactly cotton to either of those idees of yours, an' I don't know what is best. I guess I'll have to talk it over with my mates here first,

but you can tell them ladies that we 'll get 'em out somehow before we turn South. Anyhow, they don't need to worry none 'bout bein' ill-treated. Then I take it, sir, that you mean to sail with us?"

"There does n't appear to be anything else I can do."

"You 're about right there. Well, let 's shake hands on it."

I did so, deliberately ignoring both the others, and feeling my flesh twitch when I touched his flabby palm. Tuttle chewed savagely on the tobacco in his cheek.

"Damn the women!" he commented in sudden anger. "Better give the crew their breakfast, Anderson. Mr. Stephens, I 've sent Dade into the cabin to attend things aft. He 'll make a good hand at that sort o' job."

We passed out together into the bright sunlight on deck, and I remained in silence for a moment beside the rail, gazing forth across the empty sea. Had I done what was right in all these circumstances? Had I acted a man's part in this odd emergency? Under God, I was not really certain; yet I could perceive no other action possible. On every side I was a slave of peculiar conditions, a prisoner to environment. I watched Anderson as he called the crew to the cook's galley, and saw De Nova thrust his head down the open hatch to observe the situation in the engine-room, then climb the steps to the bridge, relieving the ordinary seaman who had been on watch during our conference. Tuttle disappeared somewhere forward. I turned away, and walked reluctantly to the companion.

A slenderly built, stoop-shouldered young fellow, who shuffled about like a waiter ashore, was in the pantry, and

I noticed a white cloth spread over the table, which had been lowered from its stanchions and now occupied the centre of the main cabin, and a swinging shelf suspended above.

"Ever act in this capacity before, Dade?" I asked, sizing him up in the dim light.

"Oh, yes, sir," a slight lisp to his tongue; "I've done cabin work on the coast liners."

"Then you should surely understand your business. Lay covers for four."

"Four, sir?" in surprise.

"That is what I said, Dade; two ladies, Mr. Tuttle, and myself. That makes four to my figuring. Now step lively, my lad. When will breakfast be ready to serve?"

"In about fifteen minutes, sir."

I waited until he became busy with his work, his face still filled with amazement over my revelation, then walked around the end of the piano, and rapped softly at the after-cabin door. I was in no pleasant frame of mind, being still somewhat uncertain whether I had done exactly right in thus weakly compromising with crime, and likewise thoroughly convinced that Lady Darlington would hold me equally guilty with the others. Any attempted explanation at this time of my peculiar situation would be only so much wasted breath, and I could already imagine the contempt and scorn revealed in the depths of her gray eyes as she listened. Better to let her believe the worst, think as she pleased, and then permit time to make clear revelation of the truth. Not for a moment did I consider the possibility of bearing

these two women South with us in our desperate search after treasure. By some means, somehow, I would manage to leave them safely behind, so that this enforced companionship need endure only for a day or two at most. I could bear the ignominy of it for that brief period, upheld by my own consciousness of doing them manly service. I would have a straight talk with Tuttle before night; meanwhile I could afford to brave her ladyship's scorn. So I gripped my nerves to the necessity of the encounter, and rapped softly on the panel.

Celeste opened the door with a dainty courtesy and a quick uplifting of frightened eyes to my face. She had been crying, and in some way her very manner made me suddenly aware how poorly I stood in the estimation of her mistress and herself. Yet, for the moment, I did not seriously care, stepping quietly within, cap in hand, intent merely on the rapid completion of my visit. Lady Darlington arose instantly from her chair, steadying herself to the roll of the vessel with one hand on the brass rail of the bed, and fronted me silently, the expression of her face expectant but reserved. Gazing upon her, I felt the fully revealed power of her beauty, as the sunlight streaming through the open port illumined her hair and outlined the delicate oval of her face. Like all decent men I have ever been susceptible to the charm of refined and cultivated womanhood, and there before me stood one, the ideal of my most idealistic dreaming. Wondrously fair of face, with rare nobility of character stamped upon every lineament, gracefully rounded of form, both voice and manner proof of long-enjoyed social prestige, my lady was certainly bewitching —

commandingly so — one calculated to awaken quickly the slumbering soul. The picture remains with me still, distinct, complete — the low, broad forehead shadowed by a wealth of dark hair; the widely opened, thoughtful gray eyes, with depths unfathomable; the firm chin; the slightly parted lips, rosy red with health; the cheeks faintly flushed from excitement; the full, white throat swelling to her rapid breathing; the perfectly moulded figure, swaying toward me in poise of anxiety. Yet this was not all; more than the merely physical presentation was that something — indefinable in words — which yielded supreme fascination, her very presence an inspiration, the nature within apparent through the outward form — a woman made to love, adorned by all the graces of highest civilization. Troubled as she was, surrounded by a terror no less real because she failed thoroughly to comprehend it, facing one she must distrust and secretly fear, her first utterance, friendly and courteous, merely exhibited a heart which beat warmly beneath its slight armor of pride.

"I am exceedingly glad to greet you again, Mr. Stephens," she said pleasantly, even endeavoring to smile; "you were absent so long we had begun to expect evil news."

"I regret to say, Lady Darlington, that I bring you only very little of any kind," I replied, striving earnestly to imitate her self-possession. "Arrangements on board have not yet assumed definite shape, so that I can make no promise concerning your future. I can merely assure you present safety, and pledge you every comfort the yacht affords while you remain with us."

She continued to gaze at me strangely, her eyes filled with questioning.

"Then you — you refuse to tell us our fate?"

"Merely because I do not know it. As I said before I am only one man pitted against twenty. I have asked those in control that you and your maid be trans-shipped to the first passing vessel, or else landed upon a near-by island, from which you can easily procure passage back to some civilized port. The twenty opposing have this matter now under consideration, and I can do nothing but await their decision. I possess no power to insist."

She pressed her hand over her eyes, as though she would thus hide from me the sudden horror pictured within their depths.

"What are you?" she exclaimed suddenly, her lips trembling. "Into whose hands have we fallen? I beg that you answer me honestly — why have you stolen this yacht? What real purpose underlies this terrible outrage?"

I made no effort to disguise the deep sympathy I felt for her, yet there was nothing I could answer but must have sounded both harsh and cruel.

"The motive animating the men in control is similar to that which renders possible most of the desperate deeds of the world — the search after treasure."

"Treasure!" she gasped, thoroughly bewildered. "Where do you propose going in search?"

"Far south, into the Antarctic."

The expression on her face was pitiful, yet I stood helpless to comfort.

"Merciful God! And you actually mean to bear us with you into that forsaken sea of ice? Oh, surely you jest, you seek to frighten; you cannot be earnest in such act of cruelty. Whom can I believe? What can I hope? You have told me you were the captain of this crew of buccaneers, and yet you say you can accomplish nothing with them to forward our release. Then take me to those who can! Let me beg upon my knees for mercy. Surely, surely we are of no value to you in your search after treasure. We are only weak, helpless women. Spare us the humiliation, the long terror, of passing through the awful months of such an experience on board this lawless vessel. Think of what this must mean to me, and be merciful."

There was no trace of tears in her eyes, but it was the white, agonized face, the unconsciously outspread arms of appeal, that smote me. All the former armor of pride had disappeared, and she was now merely the wholly terrified woman, beseeching my kindness. I felt all my limbs tremble, my lips falter, as I made swift response.

"Lady Darlington, believe me, I have no desire except honestly to serve you. The actual truth is, I have consented to retain what is a purely nominal command of this vessel, with no other purpose except that such outward authority yields me some opportunity to assist and protect you. Otherwise I would spurn the whole affair, and defy these outlaws to do their worst. It was a deplorable accident that brought me here and placed me in this situation. I have had no part whatever in the foul conspiracy, but am myself a victim of it. Practically I am as much a prisoner on board as yourself.

Later, if the opportunity ever be given, I shall relate you my story, and then, perhaps, you will appreciate how perfectly helpless I am to overrule the decision of this vessel's crew. They are mad with the lust of gold, crazed by the prospect of suddenly achieving vast wealth through a single bold stroke. They are beyond all powers of reason, and are led by shrewd, desperate men. To achieve their end these men have staked their lives — have not hesitated at the committal of crime, even the black crime of piracy. Would the tears of a woman influence them now? would the impotent threat of a single, helpless man? They are armed, organized, determined, desperate.

"The only thing I can do is apparently to yield to them, trusting thus to persuade them into some measure of mercy; and the only thing you can do is patiently to abide my efforts to release you from such companionship. I mean to do my best, even to the sacrifice of my life. But you must consider the situation. These men are fleeing from pursuit; their sole hope of escape lies in reaching the wild wastes of the South Seas unobserved and untraced. They can consider nothing else until this end has been accomplished and their probable safety from capture assured. Either to speak a passing vessel or put into an obscure island port would add greatly to their peril. I doubt if I can persuade them to take any such risk, though I mean to try with every power I possess. The very thought of bearing you with us into the fogs and dangers of that storm-lashed ocean is misery to me. God knows I would do anything possible to spare you such a fate. But I wish you to understand, realize

fully, how difficult my own position is. I do not bid you hope; only pray, and, above all, retain your courage. I promise nothing, because I dare venture no pledge. But I beseech you not to break down, not to exhibit open fear. If you possess the slightest confidence in me, in the sincerity of my motives, do exactly as I request: bear yourself bravely, resolutely, before these men. No doubt there are good men among them, honest sailors, and there are also other prisoners on board; perhaps, if worst comes to worst, we may overthrow the leaders and assume control. In any event our first effort should be to awaken confidence in the minds of our captors, and arrive at a frank understanding between ourselves. Lady Darlington, will you be guided in this by my judgment?"

How wonderfully expressive her face was! I could read every changing thought swaying her, — doubt, distrust, questioning, hesitancy, a faint dawning of confidence, the strengthening of will, a slight awakening of hope. She swayed unconsciously toward me, her hands still outstretched.

"Oh, I wish to believe," she sobbed, only half aloud, "I need some one, some one in whom I feel confidence, in whom I may repose faith. I beg of you not to consider me weak, a nerveless creature, but this situation is intolerable. I will endeavor to do what you ask. I will strive to be brave, helpful, appreciative. I — I think you are what you say. See, I give you my hand in promise."

I clasped it instantly within both my own, bending low above the white fingers, my lips set in firm resolve.

I retained it still when I lifted my head, and our glances met.

"What is it you first desire of me?"

"Breakfast has been prepared, and is now awaiting us in the cabin," I answered, knowing well that some form of action must strengthen her more quickly than any further talk, "and I wish you to join us at the table exactly as though this was an ordinary voyage."

"I know the food will choke me. Does Celeste sit with us?"

"I believed you would prefer having her in the circumstances. You would not feel quite so much alone."

"I should like it; it was most thoughtful upon your part. Shall — shall we be alone at table?"

"With the exception of the first officer, who is really the leader on board."

It was evident plainly enough that she shrank from the ordeal, the delicate lines hardening about the mouth, the gray eyes eloquent of disinclination. A moment she hesitated, her form swaying as though buffeted by a storm; then she slowly bent her head.

"I am at your service, Mr. Stephens."

In the main cabin we discovered the table already set and waiting, appearing bright and cheery with a brave display of snowy cloth and glittering silver, the swinging shelf above adorned by bottles and gleaming glass.

"Call Mr. Tuttle, Dade," I ordered quietly. "Then hurry back and serve."

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH I DESCRIBE CERTAIN CHARACTERS

WHAT need to dwell at length on that first meal within the luxurious cabin of the *Sea Queen?* It was only one of many we were destined to partake of together, differing little from the rest except for the novelty of the company. At our first sitting down the constraint between us was so marked as to be almost painful, yet as the meal progressed Lady Darlington succeeded so well in conquering her earlier aversion to the strange companionship in which she found herself, as to attempt conversation, and soon attracted Tuttle's undisguised admiration by her tact and self poise. I confess her efforts at entertaining surprised me, — troubled as I was with the difficulties of our position, — and I fear I did little to make them easier; fortunately, the first officer was disturbed by no such scruples, and soon appeared quite at ease, his tongue voluble, his whole manner that of smug content. I could see his little eyes, like mere gleaming slits in the leather of his face, peering across at his *vis-à-vis* as if her ready wit had given him new life.

I do not think my lady knew exactly what to make of the fellow at first, and no wonder, the man being so entirely beyond her experience. I read positive aversion

in her face as he came sideling forward to his seat at the table, bowing and smirking at my introduction, his long coat dangling to the knees, his thin hair plastered down over his oddly shaped head, and his wrinkled countenance drawn into peculiar solemnity. Yet she was gracious enough, toying politely with her food, and stealing surreptitious glances across the board where he worked industriously away, arms squared and jaws busy. At any other time it would have amused me greatly to watch those two together, but now there was no pleasure in it. I could reflect upon nothing but the leagues of ocean traversed and to be traversed, and what the uncouth Tuttle represented of unbridled power for evil.

But he was assuredly a strange bird to her, and failed to mend matters any by resorting to his trick of unctuous speech and protestations of experiences in the realm of spirits. Lord, it made me wild to throttle the fellow when he rolled his little gimlet eyes around, and gave forth his glib platitudes in such nasal monotony; more than once I sent him rather a hot retort as I observed the disgust in the countess's wondering eyes. But nothing perturbed him, wrapped securely as he was in a conceit that caused his little soul to imagine the lady viewed him with admiration. He talked of various experiences at sea in the bringing of his ships' crews to some conception of the astral body; of phases of New England's teaching of psychic force; how he had practised as a medium for more than a year in New South Wales; with his views regarding the psycho-mental system and the dual nature. The fellow certainly possessed some original ideas and explained them clearly

enough, but the constant whine of his voice, and his insinuating, oily manner, only served to annoy. Celeste watched him with absolute disgust, speechless and unable to eat, ever fingering the rosary at her throat with nervous fingers, but her mistress sought to direct his ceaseless channel of talk along the prospects of our present voyage. She did this most adroitly, too, but the old fox was far too wary for her, and stuck obstinately to his strain of spiritism until my lady finally arose in despair from her seat, and, with a hasty word of excuse, withdrew herself from us. He watched her until the door of the after-cabin closed, then reached up for the brandy decanter on the swinging shelf.

"A dam' fine woman, Mr. Stephens," he said, complacently, eying the liquor in his glass. "One not given to levity of conversation, or devoid of proper respect for sober consideration of the after world."

I stared at him silently, my blood boiling in my veins.

"Her very presence on board will prove a rebuke to the ribald spirits of the crew. I fear greatly lest they show themselves an unspiritual lot, inclined to mock at my humble efforts at ministry. No doubt she might even be willing to address them upon occasion, although there are some points in her faith wherein she requires much enlightenment, being yet, if I may say so, in the chrysalis stage."

"Mr. Tuttle," I broke in somewhat roughly, rising to my feet, "so far as I am concerned I have had entirely enough of this sort of talk. Personally, I do not believe you possess any more real belief in this rot than a rabbit, and you 'll confer a great favor on me by dispensing with

this kind of conversation in my presence. Anyway, believe what you please, but stop dinging it into my ears. The one thing I desire to know is, what do you purpose doing with Lady Darlington and her maid?"

My denunciation had no apparent effect upon him, for he smiled oilily, his fingers clasped about the empty glass.

"Truly, I hardly know. What is there to be done?" he questioned in true Yankee fashion. "Surely the lady must be quite comfortably situated in her own cabin."

"Do you mean by that you intend to compel her to accompany us throughout this voyage?"

"Apparently, Mr. Stephens, we have very little choice," and he reached up again after the decanter. "At present such would appear to be the will of the Almighty. You are evidently addicted to sneering at the works of the Infinite Spirit, relying, as unregenerate youth is apt, upon its own strength; but to one of my years and experience the laws of the spiritual realm become paramount. In this particular case, for instance, it was no part of our plan that these two females should be on board. Yet seemingly such was the will of God, for some good purpose now beyond our ken. In time all this will be made evident. But now what am I, Eli Tuttle, a mere worm of the dust, to attempt overruling the omnipotent knowledge of the Creator? It may be that the very success of our present undertaking depends upon our yielding to the divine guidance."

"And with that cowardly excuse you purpose detaining them on board?"

"The matter has not as yet been entirely decided, for

I wait clearer manifestation of the divine will, seeking spiritual guidance in prayer. This Lady Darlington promises to be a delightful companion, a most intelligent conversationalist. Her very presence would add much to the pleasures of the voyage. A truly charming woman, Mr. Stephens, is never to be despised at sea." He paused, wrinkling his narrow brow. "Still, as I remarked, the matter has not yet been fully decided upon, even in my own mind. I await patiently an expression of the will of One greater than I, and will endeavor to-night to communicate with those having clearer vision of the future. If it be plainly His desire that these two be left behind, that wish will in some mysterious manner yet be made clearly manifest unto us. Of that I have no doubt. If, to illustrate, we should chance to meet in these seas some slow, unsuspicious hooker bound for some obscure port, I might be led to believe that we were thus directly called upon to transship our fair passengers. Yet I would hold it an impious act to risk all we are striving after by turning landwards, or even hailing any vessel which might early report our presence to those in pursuit. Rather let us leave all this, Mr. Stephens, in the hands of the Almighty. He ruleth the sea even as the land."

As I stood there in this colloquy, staring down into his solemn face, listening to these blasphemous words, I could not decide whether the fellow was crazy or an arrant knave. There was an earnestness about him which would have confused clearer minds than mine. Twice I opened my lips to answer him, but turned away in silence, and climbed the companion-stairs to the deck.

I felt that I must escape his presence, — must be free to breathe in the open air.

It was a beautiful day, a heavy, black cloud hanging to the northward, but all overhead an arch of deepest blue, — deeper by contrast. The sea ran with a considerable swell, the heavy rolling forcing any one on deck to cling fast to some article of stability. I noticed immediately that the engine was laboring with less energy than when I had gone below — the conspirators were already beginning to conserve their store of coal. No glimmer of sail was in sight anywhere, and Tuttle, beyond doubt, felt serenely confident of keeping well ahead of any possible pursuit. I stood grasping the port rail, my head bared to the rush of wind, when the first officer emerged from the companion and started forward. He had already passed when the thought occurred to him that I was technically in command, and he turned back.

"I was goin' to relieve De Nova, and send him down to breakfast," he said, his tone sailor-like once more. "We have already arranged the watches, sir."

"Very well," I replied, feeling the absurdity of this play-acting, yet realizing the deep necessity for it. "Then perhaps I had better turn in and get a little sleep. Call me for the observation at noon, or if any sail shows. I suppose it is to be you and De Nova?"

"Ay, ay, sir, watch for watch, the old merchant service. Anderson and McPherson will take tricks in the engine-room."

"I was just observing that you had shut the engine down to half speed."

He swept his gaze slowly toward the horizon.

"Easy enough to gear it up if there 's any cause," he responded shortly, turning to leave. "There 's mighty few vessels churning these waters able to overhaul the *Sea Queen*."

I hung about aft for a few moments, observing among the watch on deck two of the original crew of the yacht who had evidently already become reconciled to the new order of things, and then returned below. De Nova was seated alone at the table, eating heartily, a glass of wine at his elbow. He glanced up smilingly as I stepped past toward the state-room with the desk in it which I had chosen as my own, but said nothing. At the door I paused, only to face about again. I could not help liking this happy-go-lucky creole, with his ever laughing eyes and white teeth gleaming beneath the jetty moustache. He was a reckless, merry-hearted fellow, as full of deviltry as a boy, but with never a trace of brutality behind it. With him it was sheer love of adventure, the spice of life, and not deep-seated villany, which had led him to embarkation on this enterprise. It might, therefore, be well to have him for a friend in time of need — to sound him even now regarding the fate of those women in the after-cabin.

"No prospect of starvation on this voyage, Mr. De Nova," I remarked genially, noting the variety on the board and the ample justice he was doing to it.

"I go to sea ze firs' time w'en I was seven year ol'," he returned, pausing to glance around at me, "an', only w'en I was at school in Martinique, I have been at it ever since in all kind vessel, but nevaire sat I down to ze finer table, sir, nevaire. It invites one to take up ze sea-robbery for a business, eh? An' ze mate say

we have on board ze ladies beautiful. *Sacre*, 't is luck all 'round."

I dropped into a vacant chair opposite, not greatly pleased with his careless tone, yet comprehending to some extent the mercurial temperament of the man.

"I was just going to ask you, De Nova, what you thought of Mr. Tuttle. Sometimes I suspect he is actually demented, and then again he appears sane enough. Just now at breakfast he talked like an inspired idiot, imagining that by doing so he was entertaining our passengers."

"Was it ze religion of ze spirits, monsieur?"

"Ay, and, after the women had retired, he treated me to some of the most outrageous ideas regarding them that ever a man was compelled to listen to. What do you make of him?"

De Nova sipped his wine, his black eyes laughing at me across the rim of the glass.

"It was so, I sink," and the mate shrugged his shoulders; "see, I tell you; he vas ze fine sailor-man, monsieur, an' no fool about ze mos' sings, but crazy like a loon on ze spirits. *Oui*, zat was ze way of it. Nevaire I see zat sort o' shape' head but it be crazy somew'ere — maybe it better be ze spirits zan some ozzer sings. W'at was it he say 'bout ze ladies?"

I told him, repeating Tuttle's exact words as nearly as I could recall them, yet quite unable to convey the peculiarly solemn fervor with which the man had spoken. De Nova, however, appeared capable of supplying this deficiency, for he followed my recital with manifest interest and smiling merrily.

"I've heard him go on zat way for ze hour long, monsieur," he commented as I finally concluded. "*Sacre*, I do really sink zat ze ol' fool believe he have talk wiz ze dead. Maybe w'en he was young he got soaked wiz it bad, an' so, once in a w'ile, it come ooze out like he was a sponge. Maybe zat ze way, monsieur. But he not so dam' a fool even w'en he gets ze spell. By gar, *non!* He speak ze truth w'at he say 'bout ze ladies."

"Do you mean that you are also in favor of keeping them on board?"

The creole rolled a cigarette between finger and thumb, moistened it at his lips, and applied a match to the tip, before attempting reply.

"Well, ze way I look at it, Monsieur Stephens, was like zis — zey was on board already, an' zey got take chances wiz luck, just same as you. You not wiz us because you choose it, — *non*, *non*, it was fate, — ze same way wiz ze ladies. It was ze up an' down of life. You see w'at I mean? We run off wiz ze *Sea Queen; sacre*, *oui*, but we not mean take any female passengers wiz us. Zat jus' happen — zat w'at you call ze accident — an', maybe, it was our bad luck same as theirs. *Le bon Dieu*, He know. Jus' ze same we run risk like hell, we play high stakes, we throws dice wiz our lives up. You know how, an' w'y we be fools to throw away all ze chance just to save ze ladies from ze — w'at you call it? — ze inconvenience? *Sacre*, it could not be. If ze English catch us we hang sure for zis job. W'y we play zen? We got it all down fine how we get away; wiz no mistake we make eet, but it not so pleasant to sink if we

do not — by gar, ze rope hurt!" and he felt his throat with one hand. "Maybe it be w'at you call tough on ze ladies, but ze ozzer sing would be dam' sight more tough on us."

"But, De Nova," I urged, "consider the situation from their point of view. Remember where we are bound, into the very heart of the stormiest sea on the globe. The Lord alone knows what desperate work lies before us, or what will be our fortune amid the fog and ice. Then think of these two helpless women — Lady Darlington, cultured, refined, always accustomed to a life of ease; and her maid, a high-strung, sensitive young girl — prisoners in the midst of such a crew of sea-scum as man this vessel, doomed to months of torture amid storm and cold, misery and peril. You are no heartless brute like Bill Anderson, no cold-blooded snake like Eli Tuttle. You are a sailor, capable of sympathy, able to comprehend what such a fate means to such women. Besides, what risk do we run in speaking a vessel on the high seas? We are ahead of all pursuit; we can outsteam any war-vessel on this coast; and, in a day or two more, will have dropped completely out of sight in that great waste of water south of us."

De Nova did not glance up, his eyes lowered to the table, the smile vanished from his lips, the cigarette smouldering between his fingers.

"It was a pleasure you zink me so much of a man, monsieur," he acknowledged finally. "Maybe it was true zat I have tenderness for ze ladies w'at have fallen into zis hard luck. *Oui*, I feel w'at you say. I like much to trans-ship zem, if ze right chance come, but not

if it 'peril us, ze ship, an' ze comrades. It was wort' w'ile we go on. T'ree million *pesos* not come to sailormen every day. Sure, I be reasonable, I like show mercy, but I not zink it best we hail a liner, or hunt a port on this voyage. I zink not jus' of zem, but of ze all of us. That 's my word, monsieur. I help you protect zem from ze insult; I help you make zem to have comfort, but I stay wiz my comrades. By gar, *oui;* I not risk my neck jus' for ze sentiment."

I did not know how much reliance to place upon his promise. In spite of his recklessness I felt strangely attracted toward the man, though comprehending clearly the utter uselessness of attempting to alter his present decision. The lure of wealth had, for the time being, obscured all else from before his vision, but I retained a measure of faith in his real manhood which was destined to be justified.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH I ENDEAVOR TO ASSERT AUTHORITY

I WAS on deck again at noon, and shot the sun, returning below to work out our position. The surrounding sea remained the same deserted void, with the bank of cloud extending across the northern sky. The *Sea Queen* still held closely to her course, almost directly west, and realizing my helplessness, I forebore asking useless questions. Indeed, I was secretly pleased that Tuttle still held to that point of the compass, for we were now in the direct path of Australian commerce, and hence much more likely to raise a sail at any moment than if we veered farther to the southward. If any such vessel appeared I had determined to pit my strength against the crew, even to the point of physical danger.

At one o'clock Dade called the women, and soon the four of us were seated at table again. It was by no means a pleasant meal, as Lady Darlington appeared *distrait*, in no mood for talk, and I can recall no attempt on her part at cheerful conversation. Celeste tried timidly her prettily broken English on Tuttle, but the latter was not interested, devoting most of his time to the business of eating, and hurrying back on deck. My lady's manner weighed upon my spirits, which had been none of the lightest before her appearance. I felt

profoundly that the faint influence my previous words had inspired within her mind had already evaporated; that she now held me as at one with the remainder of the yacht's crew. I arose as they retired from the table, but received no reward of recognition from her averted eyes. Feeling deserted, almost humiliated, I smoked my pipe alone on deck under the lee of the cabin. But it was perfectly useless loitering there, with no duties to perform, and the sea all about bare to the far horizon. Besides, some sailor instinct told me a storm was brewing yonder to the northward which might keep me upon the bridge all night, so, in preparation for such a possibility, I went below and lay down in my bunk. I was a long time getting asleep, finally dropping off only to be aroused by the rattling of dishes when Dade arranged the table for the last meal of the day.

De Nova was pacing the bridge as I emerged from the companion, and I had barely walked over to the port rail, observing that we were ploughing along through a dense bank of the enveloping fog which hung all about in walls of vapor impenetrable to the eye and cold and clammy to the flesh, when the voice of a seaman in the fore-cross-trees sounded suddenly. I could not see the fellow the mist held so thick, and his words seemed like a weak echo.

"Sail, almost directly ahead, sir."

"W'ereaway?" asked De Nova, peering anxiously forward. "I can see nossing. Fo'c's'l' zare — you see ze ship?"

"Nothin' in sight from here, sir."

The mate stared up into the vapor overhead.

"Ware was it you see it, you fellow on ze foreyard?"

The odd echo of a voice came back out of the sky.

"I only caught her through a hole in the fog, sir, one point off the weather-bow."

With a swift bound I was up the steps to the bridge and beside the second officer, recklessly determined to assume command. Before he clearly realized my presence I jangled the bells in the engine-room.

"Hold her steady as she is," I said sternly to the fellow grasping the wheel.

De Nova wheeled and faced me, his black eyes full of sudden anger.

"W'at ze hell you mean?" he exclaimed, so surprised he stuttered. "I was officer of ze deck."

"And I am commanding the yacht, Mr. De Nova," I retorted quickly, pushing back his hand from the signal cord. "I propose speaking that vessel yonder, and trans-shipping our passengers. Port a little, my man — no, port, you fool! — now hold her so; steady."

De Nova grasped my arm, his fingers like steel, but I broke away, pressing in between him and the rail.

"Lay your hands on me again," I threatened sternly, "and I 'll floor you to the deck. I 'll take that grin off your face, De Nova, if you attempt any interference with me now."

He understood quickly enough what I meant, and evidently had no relish for attacking me alone, for with one swift, searching glance into the fog, he leaped down the steps, and ran hastily aft. I knew he was seeking the backing of Tuttle, and armed myself with a belaying pin, peering eagerly meanwhile for the near-by sail, and

cursing the fellow at the wheel for not holding her up to the point directed. They came up together, two steps at a time, Tuttle in his shirt sleeves, and, as they attained the bridge, Bill Anderson swung himself out of the hatch and started after them. I backed away, the ugly iron pin grasped in my hand.

"You'd better keep back," I warned threateningly. "I'm ready to brain the first man who attempts to touch me."

Tuttle stopped, his jaw working savagely, his eyes on mine.

"Will you promise to keep quiet, sir, an' let us get away out o' this?"

"Damn you, no!" stubbornly, all my senses leaving me at sight of his hateful face. "I'll speak that ship yonder if I have to fight the crew of you single-handed."

"Then fight, you cockerel, an' be damned to you!" roared Anderson; and he pressed past the two of them and sprang at me.

It was hot, swift work while it lasted. The bridge, being narrow, permitted only two to come at me at a time. I struck twice, laying open the big brute's scalp, and dropping him so his head hung dangling down over the deck, his body huddled against the rail. I aimed to do as well by Tuttle, but the descending pin landed on his uplifted arm, and, before I could draw back for another blow, the fellow at the wheel released the spokes and jumped at my back, throttling me with his hands as the weight of his body crushed me to the planks. Grasping the rail I half tore myself loose, rising to one knee, and struck him twice madly in the face; but others

of the crew came tumbling on top of us, pinning me helplessly down. It was all the work of a breathless moment, and as I lay there, the knee of a negro crunching into my chest, I saw De Nova spring to the wheel and whirl it hard down, while Tuttle, his left arm dangling, his teeth set from pain, began jangling the bells in the engine-room. Scarcely had the echo reached us when a strange voice hailed sharply from out the dense fog.

"Steamer ahoy! What vessel is that?"

From my uncomfortable position I could perceive the startled Tuttle staring directly ahead of him into the fog-bank, hesitating as to what course to pursue. Then his nasal voice answered:

"Steam-yacht *Cormorant*, Panama to Easter Island, for pleasure. Who are you?"

"H.M.S. *Victory*, on cruise. Stand by, while we send a boat."

A deep oath sprang to Tuttle's lips, his fingers convulsively gripping the rail. Then he appeared to rally, the very intensity of his fear making a new man out of him.

"Lively, lads, clear the deck," he commanded harshly. "Here, one of you take the wheel. Now, De Nova, bundle that fighting fool down into the chart-house, and stand over him with a gun. Two of you fellows carry the boatswain into the fo'castle; lively, now."

They were certainly expeditious enough in my case, dragging me bumping down the steps, and flinging me in between table and bench with a violence that made me groan. I caught the glimmer of a steel barrel in De Nova's hand as he drew close the sliding door.

"It was not nice sing to do, Monsieur Stephens," he

said, not ill-naturedly, "but, by gar, out ze farsity row it was going to be done, for I shoot ze pistol very good."

"That 's all right, De Nova," I replied, realizing my complete defeat and holding no personal grudge against him. "I don't blame you. I 've made my play, and have had enough. May I sit up?"

He nodded carelessly, dropping the revolver back into his jacket pocket, yet with his black eyes fastened shrewdly on my face.

"'T is ze bes' way to talk, monsieur," pausing to listen to the mingled sounds without. "*Sacre*, I wonder w'at ze devil was up now!"

We both sat, breathing hard from our late exertions, listening anxiously, yet with vastly differing emotions, hope animating me that this was to prove a capture, or, at least, that some chance discovery by the officer visiting us would result in the release of the women below. But De Nova was in an agony of apprehension, the full peril of his position clear before him. My heart beat like a trip-hammer, and I could see beads of perspiration on his forehead. We heard the bare feet of the hurrying sailors patter along the deck, the strident voice of Tuttle issuing a few final commands, and the faint sound of oars in the water alongside. The officer came slowly up the ladder, and my heart sank as I heard him laugh carelessly to the mate's greeting. I could distinguish the sound of his voice, but not the words uttered, and in some way it impressed me with the thought that the fellow was young, a midshipman possibly, who would prove mere putty under Tuttle's expert handling. The

two went down the companion-steps together in apparently amiable converse, and we could hear the low murmur of voices as the crew hung over the rail jesting with the men-o'-war's men in the boat below. My eyes met De Nova's in the semi-darkness, and he grinned, showing his teeth.

"Nossing ver' dangerous, monsieur," he said easily. "Ze ol' fox he fool zat kid."

I attempted no response, my mind already sufficiently heavy from apprehension. Oh, for just a word, merely an opportunity to cry out our story before it was forever too late! De Nova must have felt the struggle within me, for he stretched his legs across the narrow passage leading to the door, and I saw his hand thrust into his coat pocket.

"Maybe you better not try it, monsieur," he warned quietly. "I not here jus' for ornament."

I realized that clearly enough, comprehending fully the reckless disposition of the man guarding me. Underneath his genial veneer he was one to act upon occasion, absolutely careless of the result. So I waited in silence, my teeth set hard, my hands clenched, as the last vestige of hope oozed slowly out of me. They were scarcely ten minutes below, coming up chatting in rare good fellowship, the officer clinging to the rail, his feet on the ladder, while he completed some story he had been relating with much gusto. Then we heard plainly the dip of oars, growing gradually fainter in the distance, feet pattered on the deck planks, Tuttle's voice sounded from the bridge, and the vessel began throbbing to the steady chug of the screws. We were safely under way again,

pressing our sharp bow into the fog-bank. Unable to control my weakness, I buried my face in my hands.

I do not know how long we sat there motionless, De Nova staring blankly at the vapor sweeping past the window, and I with head lowered in depression. It was Tuttle himself, with one arm in an improvised sling, who slid open the door of the chart-house, and looked in upon us.

"This is your watch yet, De Nova," he said shortly, "and I need to doctor up my arm a bit. You're a dam' hard hitter, Mr. Stephens," no trace of anger in his voice, "but that's about the last chance you'll have to kick up a shindy on this vessel. You'll go below, sir, an' stay there, unless we happen to need you."

I stepped forth onto the open deck in obedience to his gesture.

"Then I am no longer even in pretended command, but merely your prisoner."

"Call it whatever suits you best," he returned grimly. "The result will be the same in any case. We'll use you up here if we need to, but we're goin' to run this boat to suit ourselves, an' until we get out o' these waters, you'll oblige me by keepin' below deck. That's the whole of it. Well, De Nova, what are you waitin' for?"

"I sink maybe you say w'at was it ze navy man wanted?"

Tuttle's solemn countenance broke into the semblance of a grin.

"Plug tobacco," he announced, sucking in his lips with sudden enjoyment of the joke. "Gave me the

scare of my life, but that 's all it amounted to. Been out cruisin' for three months, an' the crew ready to mutiny for smokin' and chewin'. Nice, sociable little chap they sent over, too."

As I sank down into the recesses of a cushioned chair in the cabin, my spirits at lowest ebb, I glanced up at the telltale compass — we were already headed due south.

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH I AGAIN MEET HER LADYSHIP

I EXPERIENCED a restless night, the earlier hours being passed in nursing my bruises, which were exceedingly painful and more serious than I had at first supposed, and the remainder in tossing about in my bunk, busied with useless thought and vainly striving to discover some way out of our unfortunate situation. It must have been nearly morning before I finally dropped off into a restful doze. The vessel pitched abominably, and this, in connection with the noises overhead, the creaking of woodwork, and the whistling of the wind, made me aware of a change of weather for the worse outside; yet those in charge of the deck succeeded in operating the yacht without calling for my assistance. Once I stole into the cabin to observe the compass, and found we were holding fairly to the course set, the boat's head only veering a trifle to the east of south. I heard some one eating at the table in the neighborhood of midnight, but did not venture forth to ask any questions.

I sat down with the others at breakfast, nothing being said or done to indicate the trouble of the previous evening, although I limped painfully as I crossed the cabin, and I noticed that Lady Darlington glanced from Tuttle's

bandaged arm into my face with mute inquiry. She had already learned, however, the utter uselessness of asking questions, and instead made a brave, determined effort to appear unconcerned and of good cheer. Tuttle spoke but little, except to praise the behavior of the yacht during the night, and a slight attempt to explain his injury by reference to a fall on deck. He seemed preoccupied, answering her ladyship in monosyllables, his eyes listless. I thought him worn out from lack of sleep. When the uncongenial party finally deserted the table I limped back into my room for a smoke, unscrewing the porthole so as to gain a breath of fresh air. The sky without was overcast, the clouds flying low and rapidly, the sea dark, with a heavy swell from the northward, which sent us staggering forward and flung spuds of salt spray into my face as I peered out at the wild picture.

I heard Dade clearing the table, staggering back and forth with his load, and the rattle of dishes in the pantry as he placed them in their racks. Assured that the main cabin would be deserted by this time, I ventured forth, hanging to the furniture to keep from being thrown off my feet, intending to shove my head out the companion-opening and thus gain a glimpse of the deck. I was already at the foot of the ladder when my ears caught the swish of skirts, and I turned in surprise to face Lady Darlington, clinging desperately to the back of a chair. As she caught my eyes she came forward, holding hard to the table, yet swaying not ungracefully to the eccentric motions of the floor underfoot, finally sinking upon the divan, her hands extended toward me.

"Mr. Stephens," she said eagerly, her soft voice

trembling with emotion, "I have been an ungrateful woman, and have come to ask your forgiveness."

"I do not understand," I returned in amazement, not even comprehending that her hands were held out for my taking. "You have done nothing to my injury."

"Oh, but I have, for I have misjudged you; I have held you as a member of this crew of pirates; I have believed you part of the conspiracy to keep me prisoner. Now, at last, I know the truth, and you appear before me in your real character. It makes me ashamed of myself, of my actions, my words. I can only hope my mistake is not entirely beyond your pardon."

"Most assuredly not; every circumstance was against me. My own story sounded so impossible when I attempted to relate it to you in outline that I was actually ashamed of it myself, and in despair finally determined to permit you to believe whatever you pleased."

"Then you will accept my hands in pledge of friendship?"

I took them instantly, bracing myself beside the divan, gazing down into her face, which remained uplifted to mine. All the previous constraint, distrust, had completely vanished. She evidently felt no longer the slightest need of concealment, and the soft glimmer of tears was plainly discernible in the gray eyes. So absolute was her sudden abandonment of pride and self-repression that she appealed to me as a different woman.

"I wish you would inform me, Lady Darlington, how you discovered the truth?" I questioned, even yet doubtful. "What has occurred to win me your confidence so suddenly?"

"What happened on board last night. I knew nothing about it until a moment ago. Celeste spoke to the second officer, while he was at breakfast alone. He is a creole, she tells me, and can talk to her in French. He told her something of the way in which this voyage originated, and of how treacherously they entrapped you into their piratical scheme. Then he related the story of last night — of your effort to get us released, the fight on the bridge, and the subsequent visit of the naval officer. Oh, if I had only known how close we were to rescue!"

She withdrew her hands from my clasp, pressing the soft palms to her eyes in a simple gesture of supreme despair.

"I feel now, Mr. Stephens, that we are doomed — doomed to go on with this terrible voyage to its end," she continued, her voice low and trembling. "These men will never permit us to speak another vessel, if it can possibly be avoided. They are in too desperate a stress to add thus to their risk of capture. I understand this fully, and must learn to face the bitter truth with all the courage I can muster. Even you are now helpless, also, a prisoner in this cabin."

"For the time being I am practically under arrest," I coincided; "yet I am of value to those in control, and it is not likely they will keep me confined below long. None among them are competent steam navigators, and they can operate the yacht only under the most ordinary conditions."

"You believe you will be returned to command?" her eyes flashing up at me suddenly. "Oh, then, there is some hope left!"

I hesitated, dreading to speak the full truth, yet convinced that I ought not to deceive her.

"I can not say that, Lady Darlington. These men will make use of my training and knowledge so soon as we are in waters where they feel reasonably safe from pursuit. But they will never trust me again, or yield me anything better than mere nominal authority. I can perceive at present no way of escape."

She did not move, her eyes lowered to the carpet, her hands clasped tightly, her bosom rising and falling with quick, nervous breathing.

"It is so strange," she said, speaking apparently to herself, "that I feel no deep sense of fear — physical fear, I mean. The dreadful situation in which we are is apparent enough, yet it seems unreal, impossible. No doubt the very terribleness of it has paralyzed my nerves. I can not seem to think, to consider the actuality of our surroundings. The shock of discovery has been too great to permit of realization. My mind dwells upon those left behind, who, perhaps, will never know what has befallen me. It must be months, at the best, before I can relieve their anxiety. Dreadful as our situation is, yet to live in constant uncertainty is even worse." She arose to her feet, and her face brightened. "But I am not a coward, Mr. Stephens; not a weak, complaining woman, and fresh inspiration has been given me by the knowledge that I have on board one friend whom I may trust."

"Little as is the hope I can offer," I interposed gravely, "I will yet serve you to the best of my ability."

"I know you will," her voice low, but confident. "In what direction are we now sailing?"

"Almost due south."

She shivered, her eyes still upon my face.

"Do — do you believe this man Tuttle's story?"

"I hardly know what to believe," I confessed frankly. "The man himself is a mystery to me, and his yarn sounds melodramatic and almost impossible. Moreover, it is totally at variance with all published charts of those regions. Yet we, who are bred to the sea, are accustomed to miracles; and really it makes no difference what we believe, for the faith of the crew is beyond question, and they mean to take the *Sea Queen* to the spot indicated."

"Into the Antarctic?"

"To sixty-six degrees, seventeen minutes, south."

She glanced helplessly about the cabin, as though thus endeavoring to realize where she was, and what future confronted her.

"Oh, I can not, can not grasp it, Mr. Stephens! It seems a horrid dream from which I must awaken. If this were only some other vessel it would be easier for me to realize our predicament. But I have travelled so many miles within this cabin; it has been my home, where I have been mistress, surrounded by those I knew, every object familiarly associated with social and family life, that I can not comprehend that all is changed — that I am now a prisoner in the hands of desperate men, being borne away into a sea of ice, utterly alone, utterly alone."

She sank back upon the divan, her face buried in her

hands, sobbing without effort at restraint. I could not refrain from lending to the assuagement of her grief the nearness of my presence, going beside her and bending so low as to breathe the slight fragrance of her hair.

"We do not sail beyond the power of God, Lady Darlington," I said soberly; "many a vessel has gone into that sea and come safely forth again. It is true I am not much as compared with what you have left behind, yet, so long as I live, you shall never be utterly alone."

She looked up instantly, endeavoring to smile through the tears clinging to her long lashes.

"Oh, I am so ungrateful!" she exclaimed hastily. "So unworthy; but my life has not been passed in rough places, and I am no heroine, only a thoroughly disheartened woman. But I am going to try, Mr. Stephens, to be brave. You spoke of hope a moment ago; do you possess the least thread to which I may cling for comfort?"

"Only that I may discover among those on board some who will rally with us in opposition to Tuttle's plan. I fear any such faith is vain, but there are members of your former crew who might be trustworthy, and I believe De Nova would prove himself a manly fellow in emergency."

"Do you know the names of the captured on board?"

"Nord, Olsen, Chambers, and the engineer, McKnight."

She wrinkled her brows, endeavoring to recall the characteristics of the men mentioned.

"The engineer is thoroughly to be depended on; he is a London Scotchman, rough, erratic, but faithful. Olsen is a Swede, a shaggy fellow, yet with an honest face. I would feel no confidence in the others."

"Then we might possibly influence McKnight, Olsen, and possibly De Nova, three, all told — yes, and there is a man we captured just as we were setting off, — little enough at the best on which to build air-castles. Nevertheless, it will be well to ascertain definitely where these men stand. As soon as I am free to go on deck again I will endeavor to cultivate their acquaintance."

"Possibly Celeste might influence this De Nova; he is the second officer, is he not?"

"Yes; a reckless scamp, but not without heart. It certainly could do no harm for her to try."

"And is there nothing we can attempt until then? Nothing I can do?" pleadingly.

It was an unconscious act, my taking her hands, yet somehow I had forgotten who she was and the social barrier between us, thinking of her merely as a woman in distress, fighting down the terrors of her heart and clinging to me for renewed strength. She had evidently forgotten also, for she made no resistance.

"Nothing, only that hardest of all tasks — waiting," I answered, a depth of tenderness in my voice and manner which I neglected to conceal. "Even now some accident may occur to bring release, but we ourselves can do nothing for our own relief. We are heading into the most desolate waters of the globe, though even there Providence might send some wandering vessel across our track, or put into our hands some weapon of defence.

While there is life there is hope, but in the meantime there is nothing for us but to wait."

She did not attempt to answer, did not withdraw her hands, sitting there in almost breathless silence, her sad eyes shadowed by their drooping lashes. When she finally spoke all the life had seemingly gone out of her voice.

"That is the most difficult task of all — merely to wait. Oh, if there were only something to be accomplished, I could retain my courage."

"Yet I trust you even in that task."

"But if I fail, if I yield utterly to the fear within my heart?"

"You shall not," my voice firm with conviction. "You shall find strength even to wait."

"Oh, but you do not know me, Mr. Stephens; you do not comprehend how weak I am."

"My acquaintance has not been long, yet we learn quickly in such circumstances," and I gazed directly into her eyes. "I believe in you, and the knowledge of your real nature as just revealed has only served to strengthen my confidence in yourself, and also my own resolution. You may doubt your courage, but I do not. Whatever the need, Lady Darlington, you are not the one who will fail. Your eyes tell me that, and I intend to trust in them. Although you are a woman, you possess the stout heart of your race."

"My race; you mean — "

"I mean the fighting blood of old England; the stuff which has floated the cross of St. George the world around."

She drew a quick breath, her lips parted.

"But I am not English, except by adoption. I am of American ancestry."

The frank avowal astounded me, it came so unexpectedly; yet I was quick enough to turn it to good account.

"So much the better. It draws us even closer, to be of the same blood. I possess greater faith in the power of my own countrywomen to meet adversity bravely. But now let us talk of other matters. No good can result from dwelling longer on the situation in which we find ourselves, while there is nothing to be done but wait."

It was not an easy task to lead her mind into other channels. The fierce pitching of the vessel, the distant sound of voices on deck, all conspired to defeat my purpose by reminding her that we were being buffeted by the great surges of the South Seas. Yet she endeavored bravely to respond to my thought, and so, at last, our conversation drifted, almost naturally, from the merest commonplace into a frank exchange of impressions upon many topics of common interest. That her own ideals should be based upon intelligent understanding was not to be wondered at, but I read in her face awakening interest in the discovery that a sailor could have read widely and reflected clearly upon subjects supposed to belong exclusively to the elect of earth. It was long since I had been privileged to sit thus in cordial, unrestrained intercourse with a cultured woman, and for the time being I forgot all except her presence and the delight of her voice. The indescribable charm of it abides

with me still in memory, the intelligence of the gray eyes uplifted questioningly to my own, the lips smiling to some sally of wit or story of humor, the flush deepening on the cheeks, the swift, purposeful gestures of the hands. Thought begot thought, words rioted in careless abandon, and all unconsciously we opened up the depths of our natures as though we had been friends for years, rather than chance acquaintances flung together by as strange a fate as ever befell human beings. Never do I picture that cabin of the *Sea Queen* without again beholding her, braced back against the green plush of the divan, her eyes glowing, her fair face reflecting each changing emotion of the soul.

We indulged in no personal references, although I confess a strong temptation to question her relative to her earlier life, as well as her English marriage. She afforded me no opportunity, or rather no excuse, and consequently I said nothing, for, in very truth, she was not one with whom a comparative stranger could easily venture such liberty. Not but that she proved most frank, most delightfully companionable, yet with all this she retained an intangible reserve which clearly drew the line of intimacy. How long we may have thus conversed I could not say, for time slipped by unnoted by either. Twice Celeste peeped about the end of the piano, a scarlet ribbon flaming in her black hair, but her mistress saw her not. We were delving into the fascinating cult of Hindu religions, and she was busily explaining certain experiments in the occult since my last excursion into the realms of civilized life, when Mr. Tuttle suddenly flung open the door of the companion, and came

scuttling down the steps. The rapid change from the bright light outside to the dimness of the cabin — for a tarpaulin had been stretched across the skylight — partially blinded him, and he stood for a moment, grasping the rail, staring at us before he recognized who we were.

"Goin' to have a squall of rain," he explained nasally. "I came down after some oilskins."

He went directly into his state-room, which was just across from mine, and the moment he disappeared Lady Darlington arose from the divan.

"We have certainly been permitting our thoughts wide range, Mr. Stephens, and you have even succeeded in luring me to forgetfulness of loneliness and peril. I can only thank you with all a woman's gratitude."

She vanished amid the deeper shadows aft almost like a fleeting vision, and as Tuttle climbed the steps, his oilskins shimmering dully, great drops of rain began hurtling against the forward windows of the cabin.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH WE SAIL DUE SOUTH

THOSE days and nights following, while serving to bear us continually deeper into the immense expanse of water that concealed the mystery awaiting us in the great South Sea, contained little of incident directly relating to this narrative. They arise clear before my memory, yet furnish nothing of importance, — mere recollections of loneliness; of unvexed seas; vast, endless leagues of tumbling water occasionally shimmering beneath the golden rays of the sun, again showing green and savage under low gathering clouds, or faintly tinted by the silver of the moon. It was all most wonderful, and never before did ocean appear to me so majestic, cruel, sombre, and boundless. Day following day that same wide circle of the sky came down to unite with the circle of the waters. It was almost as though we remained motionless, "a painted ship upon a painted ocean"; only the figures on the paper, the pins on the chart, the sharp stem cleaving the waves asunder, and the oily wake astern leaving us aware of steady progression through this trackless desert of the sea.

Yet how truly marvellous it all was; how variable in its apparent changelessness — the silent, gigantic roll of huge surges, foam glistening along their uplifted crests,

the shadows below grim with threat; the dull gray of sea and sky when the clouds hung like a pall above us; the misty shapes which seemed on every hand, rising ghost-like from the heaving waters, as the fog swayed to the mystic wand of the wind; the strange, steely gleam of frost in air and sea as we made lower latitudes; the slow diminishing of variety in color, fading away into sombreness, as if death lurked everywhere; the red glow of sunrise and sunset bridging the dancing waves with wires of light, or tinting cloud-masses banked across the distant sky; the pale, spectral gleam of southern stars, already growing cold in the great void overhead, and shimmering back from off the restless waters in ghostly radiance! Everywhere we confronted majesty and power, beauty to charm, grandeur to inspire awe, immensity, and all the speechless mystery of God. Nowhere before did I ever so feel my own littleness before the marvels of creation. We were only a speck in that wide immensity of ocean, — a mere floating ship amid the desolate waste of waters, — all about us utter barrenness, incalculable distance, loneliness, and death.

To one afloat, inspired by the responsibility of command, harassed by continuous duty, burdened by the necessities of labor, the mind ever active relative to common things, such reflections and impressions are not easily aroused. But to the idler the great lessons of the deep are borne swiftly home, abiding forevermore, intensified by every awakening emotion of the soul. Oh, that vast, silent, sombre, lonely expanse! Never again can I banish it from memory, or become indifferent to its majestic grandeur. The night stars, the day sun, merely

served to render its barren depths more apparent, its awfulness more profound. Each succeeding day a strange dread took possession of me, as we pressed deeper and deeper into the heart of the mystery, guiding our course by the stars, — into that wild immensity of watery desert encircling the Southern Pole.

We passed somewhat to the westward of Juan Fernandez, so far out that only with a glass from the fore-top could the distant peaks be dimly deciphered in blue, misty blots against the sky. Already Tuttle had banked the fires, and spread the *Sea Queen's* canvas, reaching to the westward to get the most possible out of the fresh breeze. The yacht had been originally rigged merely for purposes of emergency, with a spread of cloth quite inadequate to our present requirements. But square yards and extra canvas were discovered stowed away below, and these were hoisted out upon deck, the entire crew busily employed in remodelling the equipment aloft. De Nova was an ingenious fellow, Tuttle possessed the instincts of a slave driver, and we had sufficient hands on board to make this a comparatively easy job ; hence with block and tackle aloft and strong arms below, the heavy spars were safely elevated and secured, while diligent sail-makers attached the new canvas to the bolt ropes ready to be hoisted away. The *Sea Queen* changed motive power and appearance as if by magic, the square yards hiding the jauntiness of her keel, and concealing the rake of her masts, the white sails bellowing out before the wind, sending her swooping forward through the water like a great bird, leaning over until at times her lee rail was all awash with white foam and her forward decks glistening

with spume. She seemed fairly to leap the hollows, plunging her sharp nose into the crest of the waves and becoming so hard to control under the great press of canvas aloft that it became necessary to station two men constantly at the bucking wheel.

Tuttle drove her recklessly, holding on in spite of crackling wood and sails threatening to tear loose from the bolt-eyes, taking shrewd advantage of each slant of wind, and lowering canvas only when danger was deadly. Twice I ventured to expostulate with him, driven to it by fear lest the very groaning masts would be ripped out of her, but he only laughed sneeringly in my face, and sent a third man to the spokes of the wheel. Nevertheless he was a master sailor, always easing her just in the nick of time, never yielding an inch of way once fairly gained. The moment those spreading white sails arose above the deck, outlined against the sky, and the monotonous chug of the engine ceased, the gloomy ex-whaleman became a new creature — masterful, compelling, resourceful. He had come into his own, he was at home, and the rejuvenated *Sea Queen* leaped forward at his will, as though endowed with fresh life. He seemed to understand her moods, her caprices, as though he had sailed her in every sea, and I watched him test her, loosening a rope here, tightening another there, striving to discover her good and bad qualities, until my admiration for his seamanship almost overbalanced my growing detestation of him otherwise.

For Tuttle, the man, became more and more offensive, as he thus realized his own power and the little future value I was likely to be to him. I know little

of his treatment of the crew, although I saw him strike Johnson with a belaying pin because the fellow tailed onto a wrong rope, laying his head wide open with an ugly gash, and on another occasion he kicked the cook from the bridge to the deck below for some fancied insolence. Yet to me these bursts of passion were less disagreeable than his continuous surly manner, rendered almost unbearable by an occasional outburst of spiritistic faith, and the nasal application of Scripture. We who lived aft never knew what his peculiar mood was until after he took the initiative, nor, even then, how long it would likely last. Lady Darlington became positively afraid of him, dreading his approach, shrinking from his address, yet not daring to withdraw wholly from his presence. His sole topic of conversation was psychomancy, and every time she endeavored to lead him to some more pleasant subject he would return with dogmatic persistence to that one rather dismal theme. Never have I encountered preacher who knew the Bible better, quoting from it freely and bolstering up wild, fanciful theories with copious extracts from the text. The separate existence of the soul, the second coming of Christ, and the dual nature of man were his special hobbies, and for many an hour we held to our seats while he expounded and explained, growing intensely earnest, and oftentimes angered by Lady Darlington's adroit questioning. His blatant self-conceit saved him from realizing her utter weariness, and he never seemed to tire of his own unctuous, nasal tones. Heavens, but the fellow was an insufferable bore! Celeste would slip away unobserved, but her mistress and myself had no means of escape.

Not that he paid slightest attention to me, or ever directed his conversation in my direction. Indeed, as a general thing, he ignored my presence utterly, yet I could not basely desert her, the more when I realized that her very eyes were urging me to remain. For continuous days and days the fellow would refrain from addressing me by so much as a word, scarcely replying even to direct questioning. To my expressed desire to learn something about the position of the yacht he returned a gruff, almost insulting, answer. After that I took an extra sextant I had found below on deck at the noon hour, and made my own observations, working them out at my leisure. When he first discovered me at this he came striding over with the evident intention of interfering, but as I straightened up with fists ready he seemingly thought better of it and passed by with a sneer. Had the fellow laid hand upon my instrument I should have struck him to the deck. Indeed, nothing held me from declaring open war but an intense realization of Lady Darlington's dependence upon me and the recognized fact that the entire crew would assuredly side with him in case of trouble.

I remained quietly below for three days, and even then was not released by any formal word of mouth. I simply became so tired of the senseless imprisonment that I mounted to the deck, taking Lady Darlington with me, determined to be confined to the cabin no longer except by physical force. De Nova was upon the bridge when we emerged from the companion, but he merely glanced at us curiously. Tuttle, coming aft a little later, retained sense enough to remain silent.

The three days passed below had thrown me much into the society of both mistress and maid, although the frank intimacy of that first conversation with Lady Darlington was never resumed. There seemed an intangible barrier of reserve between us, although we talked freely enough regarding our situation, the peculiarities of Tuttle, and the constantly changing wonders of the deep. It was as if neither of us quite dared to probe beneath the surface, opening up once more the depths each endeavored to conceal; rather were we content to drift as the tide ran. Celeste was little more than a child to romp with, womanly enough in some things, yet with laughter and tears ever chasing each other as her mercurial nature responded to the touch of the present. She was sincerely devoted to my lady, bright, generally vivacious, and a chatty little creature once you had succeeded in unlocking her lips. I enjoyed listening to her soft, broken English, and when Madame requested she would sing and dance to us alone, with great abandon and no small ability. Once Tuttle caught us so employed, and never shall I forget the shocked expression of his face, or the sharp denunciation of his tongue! I only laughed at him, but Lady Darlington took it all seriously enough, and the petite Celeste danced for us no more.

Yet our occasional song together did not wholly cease; several times, driven to it by some memory, we gathered about the piano, Lady Darlington's white fingers gently touching the keys and our voices merging into words familiar to us all. At such times I noticed the sailors' faces framed in the cabin skylight; even Tuttle condescended to listen, always asking us for certain church

hymns he liked. It may seem strange that we should have heart for singing under such conditions, but music is in itself a comfort, and we eagerly welcomed anything which diverted thought or hastened the passing of dull hours. Once De Nova came below while we were about the instrument, and joined with us uninvited. Then he took my lady's place at the keys, and, in rich tenor voice, sang the Neapolitan fisher's song of "Santa Lucia," and when we brought him back again with an encore he and Celeste gave us a gay French serenade, full of passion and intensity.

I saw comparatively little of the second officer, however, during this period, and gained an impression that he was endeavoring to avoid meeting me. Yet I ran across him twice in company with Celeste, once in the cabin, and again in the narrow deck space overhanging the stern, and began to hope vaguely that the girl was winning him over to our interests. With the others I sought to approach I made no progress. McKnight seldom showed his nose above deck, and then only to smoke in sullen silence, seated gloomily on the edge of the main hatch or to the lee of the chart-house. My efforts to converse with him were met with monosyllabic replies, and I soon came to consider him an unsocial brute. Olsen was undoubtedly honest enough, yet without intelligence, his eyes those of a faithful dog. The Chilean, a smooth-faced young fellow wonderfully deficient in chin, I learned had been assigned as assistant to the cook, and was thus kept too busy inside the galley even to be approached. Indeed, so far I had not seen his face on board the ship.

We enjoyed fair weather, although the skies were overcast much of the time, and we occasionally encountered heavy seas. Once the edge of a tornado swept roaring down upon us, and for two nights and a day the laboring *Sea Queen* scudded to the westward under closely reefed canvas, lashed unceasingly by mountainous waves, staggering as dizzily as if in her death throes. Yet the instant he dared, Tuttle had the soaked canvas spread and was beating his way backward through the smother. In all this time we raised only a single sail to relieve that ocean loneliness. I chanced to be on deck when Willis cried its discovery from the foretopsail yard, and a moment later Tuttle was half-way up the ratlines, gazing at the distant object through his glass. That he discovered nothing in the appearance of the stranger to awaken alarm was manifest by his ordering no change in our course, and so we bore straight down, passing the other within less than half a mile. We were all gathered upon deck, but the reward was a small one. The stranger was evidently a whaler long out from home, a small brig, dirty and disreputable, with blunt bows and sails patched and almost black from smoke. An array of various colored flannels flapped in the rigging, and a dozen hairy-faced sailors stared at us curiously over the rail. One fellow, wearing a great mackintosh cap, clung recklessly to a back-stay, and hailed, his voice clear, yet the merest thread of sound. Tuttle stood on the bridge, motionless, making no answer, and so we swept past them like a phantom. Three hours later the last faint gleam of their dingy canvas had disappeared to the northward.

At thirty-five degrees south latitude we met with our first snow squall, and began to experience the rigors of the stormy ocean we were already beginning to invade. Ten degrees lower down we encountered thin drifting ice, through which we plunged, our sharp bow ripping it asunder as though so much paper. Two days later a small berg, a mere glittering pinnacle, came floating out of the fog and went silently past upon our weather quarter. Stoves were brought out from between decks, running rigging overhauled, the boats looked over carefully, and the slop-chest opened and warm clothing distributed among the men. Fearlessly the *Sea Queen* raced forward, ever with her bowsprit pointed to the southward, dipping her forefoot into the wild waters of the grim Antarctic.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH DE NOVA SPEAKS

WHAT now occurred came upon us with such suddenness that I find it difficult to relate the incidents in detail. We must have been below the fiftieth degree of south latitude, and about one hundred thirty-five degrees west, with the wind strong and occasionally puffing up into squalls, bearing flakes of snow which stung exposed flesh and left a thin mantle of white along the decks. There was no ice in sight, and we were running free under reefed canvas, the yacht keeling over as the breeze freshened, until the smother came tearing past within a foot of the lee rail. The sky overhead was clear, the air cold and nipping, a dense cloud of fog hanging just above the water to the southwest, and the unmistakable blink of ice straight ahead.

It was Tuttle's watch below, and as I paused in the protection of the companionway looking forward, while I got my pipe going, I could see De Nova on the bridge, wrapped up like a mummy, and crouching well down behind the tarpaulins. The deck-watch were grouped under the overhang of the forecastle, stomping their feet and threshing their hands about to keep warm. All about was a wild sea scene, never to be looked upon amid any other stretch of waters on the globe — a dull,

dead picture of utter desolation, of madly racing waves, of green, sullen sea, of pale blue sky, the very frost in the air apparent; a cold, drear expanse of monotonous distance wherever the eye looked, — a desert of water below, a void of air above. I shivered as I looked out upon it, drawing my heavy pea-jacket closer at the throat, and pulling my cap lower over the eyes. Big Bill Anderson, his head still bound up where I had cracked him, slouched in the doorway of the chart-house, staring aft, and a moment later De Nova came lumbering down the steps from the bridge and spoke with him for some time earnestly. I could hear the muttering of their voices, and see the creole's gesticulations, but nothing definite reached me except an occasional gruff oath. The boatswain finally went forward, clinging to a lifeline to keep footing on the slippery deck, and the second officer clawed along the weather-rail until he reached the companion.

"I would like to have talk wiz you, Monsieur Stephens," he said, quite respectfully, swaying to the wild leaps of the vessel. "Maybe if we go to ze lee of ze cabin here we 'll be out of ze win'."

I followed him in silence, wondering what could be coming now, yet ready enough to take advantage of any opportunity which might present itself. De Nova braced his back against the rail, his cap drawn so low that I could perceive little of his face but the glitter of black eyes.

"We 're a little bit bozzered w'at to do, Anderson an' me," he began, evidently ill at ease and scarcely knowing how to express himself, "an' so we talk it ovaire, an'

decide maybe we bettah speak wiz you about it now, before ze mattaire get mor' bad, or ze men forward catch on to ze facts an' get ugly. Maybe it come out all right, maybe not, but, by gar, it ain't no nice job to go sail 'bout zese seas under a madman — *sacre, non!*"

"A madman!" I echoed in amazement. "Do you mean Tuttle?"

He nodded gravely, his expression devoid of all merriment.

"'T is ze way it was. We not know sure w'ezzer you see it zat way or no, but damme, Monsieur Stephens, if ze fellow ain't mad as ze March hare. He was ze fine sailor all right — *oui*, zat was true — nobody get more out of ze *Sea Queen* zan he get. *Sacre!* he drive ze sheep hard; it make my hair white ze way he hol' on. Maybe I not be 'fraid to take ze chance of ze voyage if it just be all men on board. I not care zen, for I risk my life wiz ze ozzers. But, monsieur, I keep myself to sink of ze ladies down below, an' how zat fellow was gettin' more crazy all ze time. *Sacre!* it make me crazy too. Zere 's no knowin' w'at he do w'en he zat way; he take spells w'en maybe he murder. I hear him mutter it; I see it in ze man's eye. He was much afraid of you, monsieur, an' zat is ze time w'en such fellows get — w'at you call it? — ze dangaire."

I stared into the mate's face, barely able to comprehend this quick justification of my forebodings, brought so closely home. Tuttle was odd enough to be sure, eccentric in both word and action, cracked undoubtedly in matters of spiritism, but that he was a really dangerous lunatic had never once entered my head. Yet as I stood

there various small happenings recurred to memory tending to confirm in part De Nova's assertion — the expression in his eyes as he watched me furtively across the table, the stealthy manner in which he had crept up behind me on deck only the night before, his sullen outburst of rage when Lady Darlington had once questioned a peculiar assertion he had made. I shivered at sudden realization of the peril we were in, but remained only partially convinced.

"What reason have you to think the man as bad as all that?"

"Well, monsieur, I watch him for long time; Bill, he watch him, for we not like ze way he act since we first sail. Maybe he be luny before zen, but he get worse on ze voyage. By gar, I not more as half believe he ever see zat ship down here in ze ice; I watch him, an' I get to sink maybe he just dream it was so. He could do zat, an' zen make himself sink it was all true, just like he tell it. Sure, I know zat might be — it not impossible, monsieur. Bill an' me, we talk it all ovaire, an' ze mate not tell ze same story ze way he did in Valparaiso. He forget some, he add more. By gar, I lose much my faith in it. If zat ship show up, or ze island either, I be mighty surprise'. *Oui, oui!* Ze man Tuttle, he crazy all right; we know zat for sure. Do he not talk wiz you, monsieur?"

"No, not lately; indeed, he has scarcely spoken to me since our trouble."

"Zat was it; zat was w'y you not notice. Well, he talk much — w'at you call ze blue streak — to Bill an' me. *Sainte Anne*, how he talk! He have new talk every

day, an' ze notions he speak make a dog sick, by gar! He been mighty bad for t'ree week now, but ze las' two night he raise hell for sure. *Sacre*, it make me 'fraid, he so big fool. Listen ; I tell some sings. I was on watch, w'en he come up from ze cabin ; he not half dress, but it cold as hell," De Nova shivered ; " yet he walk back an' forth, back an' forth, across zare in front of ze cabin, like ze lion in ze cage, talking wiz himself, an' wringing his hands. Maybe he keep it up two hour, an' I sink he freeze. Ze cook's cat was 'sleep in ze long-boat. I watch w'ile he come up an' see ze poor devil. Quick he grab her by ze tail an' fling it way overboard, like zat. I hear ze cat yell, an' zen go splash. Zat seem to make him feel bettaire, for he laugh, an' zen go below."

The mate changed his position, and I noticed his eyes looked sleepless and tired.

" Las' night he take another turn. He dog you all ovaire ze deck, monsieur, like he haunt you maybe. I was on ze bridge so I not see very much, but Bill, he tell me how it was. He say Tuttle sneak up behin' you twice, like he would hit you in ze back. Once, w'en you was right by ze rail, Bill, he sung out to you, so as to make you look 'round. Maybe you will remember zat, monsieur?"

I nodded, beginning now to grasp the full gravity of these revelations.

" Bill he not got mooch use for you, Monsieur Stephens," the speaker went on, smiling grimly, " an' won't have w'ile his head ache, but he was no dam fool. He know w'at it mean if you was knock' out. By gar, it be hell! If Tuttle was off his nut, you was ze only

navigator on ze ship, an' it not do for us lose bose. Zat was w'y Bill he care; he not want to die in zis sea; by gar, *non!* Well, after w'ile you go below, an' zen ze first officer did ze damnedest sing ever I saw on ze ship. He busted into ze fo'c'stle, monsieur, wizout any invite from any man Jack o' 'em, an' plumped down on his knees by Snyder's bunk, an' begun to pray. *Mon Dieu*, I vonder zey not murder him. Larsen come out, an' beg Bill an' me to take him out, but he pray all ze time till we dump him in his own cabin. He not fight, he jus' pray. *Sainte Marie!* it make me sick; an' ze men zey talk, an' ask question." He paused, passing one hand across his eyes. "But zat not ze worst, monsieur — *sacre, non!* he see ze ghost."

I said nothing, absolutely silenced by the expression on the mate's face.

"Zat was very bad zing for ze sailor-man, monsieur," he continued awkwardly. "It always mean death was ahead of ze ship. *Sacre*, I know; I been on board ze ghost ship. Once I sail wiz one, an' we drop ovaire ze corpses from La Plata to Santiago; ze sharks follow us all ze way. By gar, I not forget zat! An' it was begun here, monsieur. Las' night Mapes, he snap off from ze fore-yard, an' maybe he die; sure he die wiz ze ghost on board. It was his father zat Tuttle sees; he told me it. Ze ol' man was a preachaire in Connecticut, an' w'at ze hell his spook was up to down in zese seas is more as I know, but Tuttle he swear it was here, an' twice now he come up on deck in my watch, sweating blood, an' trying to get away from zat spirit w'at haunt him. You was an educated man, monsieur, an' maybe you know w'at to do,

but dam if it was n't too much for Bill an' me to tackle alone."

"De Nova," I said quietly, "you just said I was an educated man. Well, I have some reason to believe you are, also, and first of all I should like to know why you pretend otherwise? Why do you endeavor to talk like a fo'c'stle hand?"

He hung in the wind, surprised both by my direct question and the sudden change of topic. Then the old smile came back to his lips.

"Maybe it was habit, monsieur, from twelve year' passed in zat sort of company."

"I was correct then in believing you have received more than an ordinary education?"

"I took ze classical course in ze college at Martinique, an' zen two year' of ze train' for ze priesthood. *Oui, monsieur.*" His eyes wandered out over the empty waters. "Zen ze sea call me, an' maybe ze devil also. Zat was ze whole of it."

"Yet you believe in ghosts?"

The creole crossed himself.

"*Sacre*, I know not w'at I believe. But it make ze blood chill to hear Tuttle tell w'at he see down zare in ze cabin. Dam ze fellow! he got me all of a shiver, wiz w'at he say. Ze question not w'at I believe, monsieur; it w'at we do wiz him?"

I struck the rail with my fist, vexed at my own inability to take the initiative.

"Yes, that's the issue, De Nova," I returned quickly, "but I 'm not the one to decide it. I 've known what I would do from the first, if I had the power. Tuttle's

insanity was not necessary to make me act, — his brutality to those women below, his shanghaiing me into this fool scheme, were enough. I am for taking possession of the vessel, even if we have to lash him to his berth."

"Zat was not to be done, monsieur."

"And why not? Must we sail with a madman? This is no regular voyage; not a man aboard has signed papers. Tuttle is no better than a pirate, and to overthrow him and assume control of the yacht would not be mutiny. We might sail straight back to Valparaiso, and not a thing could be done with us. The authorities would hold that we were victims of his plot, and that we rebelled just as soon as we understood the truth."

The mate shuffled from one foot to the other, his black eyes hardening.

"Now see here, Monsieur Stephens," he burst out, "zat was only ze half of it. Sure we not reg'lar crew, but we partners. Zat was ze way it is. We take ze big chance for ze profit. Zose sailor-men for'ard have nossing agains' zis Tuttle. Zey sink he tell truth. Sure he rough; he hit one or two, he run amuck when his mad is up, but zat no more as other skipper. He not so bad zat way. Maybe zey sink him a bit queer in ze head, maybe zey not like his praying, or his talk of ze spirits, but so long he sail ze ship all right, zey stick wiz him. Zat all zey know — how sail ze ship; dam ze rest! Zey believe w'at he tell, zey divide zose *pesos* every watch below. Zat's it. If we lay hand on ze mate, by gar, ze lads fight for him till zey drop. Zey will do it, monsieur, an' no pretty talk you put up will make zem sink anysing but zat you try rob zem of zeir

share. I know sailor-men, an' in case like zis, you got to go dam slow."

"You are speaking for yourself and Anderson as well as the men, I take it?"

"Maybe so, monsieur; w'y not? We have long voyage, an' now we not so very far from zat place we aim at. Zen w'y not take look 'long zat latitude before we turn north again? W'y not, monsieur? Sure you not blame me for feel like zat?"

"No, De Nova, I don't blame you," I replied honestly, although disappointed at his confession. "That's natural enough. Still, I hoped there was a little French girl down below who might be worth more to you than even that fantastic dream of money."

He did not meet my eyes, his own gaze out over the gray tumbling waters. But he smiled good-naturedly.

"I nevaire suppose, Monsieur Stephens," he returned quietly, "zat a girl care less for man if he have plenty ze chink. A few days more not make much difference to ze ladies below. Zey have ze plenty eat, ze coal to burn. Maybe zare be truth in ze mate's story; anyway, it worth ze try. My share of ze *pesos* be bettaire as a sailor-man's pay. *Oui*, why not?"

The man was undoubtedly right from his point of view, and I comprehended fully the utter uselessness of any further argument. I was still practically alone; yet now I had an understanding which greatly strengthened me.

"Then why did you speak to me about Tuttle?"

"To warn you take care of yourself, monsieur; to have you keep your eye on him."

"That, then, is all you expect me to do?"

"So I sink; zat will be all so long as he sail ze ship right, an' keeps away from ze ladies."

Ay, but would he? The vagaries of a crazed man were beyond all guessing, and to be cooped up in the confines of a narrow cabin with one, and he in virtual command, was anything but a delightful position. I no longer doubted Tuttle's mental condition; in a way I had suspected it long before, but now I possessed positive proof. Moreover, his enmity was directed toward me, and might at any moment find violent expression. That the man was constantly armed was most probable. I believe now that had I felt no responsibility for the safety of others on board, I should have sought quarters elsewhere, — amidships, or even in the forecastle, — but I could not desert what was so plainly my post of duty. Even as I gazed down over the rail at the white foam rushing past us, it was to perceive the appealing eyes of Lady Darlington. De Nova's voice aroused me.

"Would you min' to giv' me ze present position of ze ship, monsieur?"

I glanced around at him, startled by so unexpected a question.

"Our position! Does n't Tuttle prick off the day's run on the chart?"

"Maybe he do, but he keep ze map in his own room. He get ver' mad w'en I ask him to see w'at it was. Zat was w'at he have agains' you — ze takin' of ze observation. He not seem to want us to know. I understan' not w'at he be up to, but I have to guess w'ere we was for maybe two week'."

I gave him our position according to my latest figures, and we went forward to the chart-house, hunting among the maps there, until we finally discovered an old one partially covering our course. By means of this I indicated with some accuracy about where we were, and the point toward which we were driving the *Sea Queen*. I left him studying over it and descended the companion-steps, unwilling longer to remain out of sight of those I guarded. My lady met me in the dim light of the cabin, her lips smiling welcome.

"I have just found the music you were so anxious to hear," she exclaimed triumphantly. "Shall I play it for you now?"

And so we sailed on into the pitiless ice, through the cold, gray seas of the Antarctic, under a mad skipper, and I looked down at her smooth cheek, breathed the faint perfume of her hair, and strove vainly to forget.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH THE GHOST APPEARS

DIFFICULT work it was keeping sealed lips while we conversed upon matters far away, each endeavoring to avoid any reference to present surroundings. I knew I could fully trust this woman, could safely confide in her, yet surely there was no immediate necessity for telling her this latest development in Tuttle's case. Already she had burden enough to bear, and the manner in which she bore it awoke my sincere admiration. Whatever of despair, of womanly shrinking her private cabin may have seen during those weeks of loneliness, she brought nothing outside its doors but courage and inspiration. Smiles, not tears, greeted me daily, and although I comprehend clearly the continuous struggle which gave them birth, they none the less awoke within me a regard and respect for her no words can fitly express. Her love of nature, and especially of the varying moods of the sea, sustained her strength where other women would have failed utterly. No peril of the elements daunted her, and she remained keenly susceptible to these ocean pictures ever revealed about us in new, strange settings. While upon deck her eyes were aglow with delight, gazing forth across the immense sea vista encircling us — the wild tossing desert, with its sullen grays, its sombre, ice-strewn waters. Once, I remember,

she lingered beside the rail with me, clinging to my arm for support against the yacht's tumbling, her loosened hair flapping in the wind, her cheeks tingling from the flying spray which occasionally lashed our faces. It was my look of inquiry that unlocked her lips to confession.

"I can not help it, Mr. Stephens, but the spectacle of the sea awakens all that is divine within me," she said, her lips smiling, her eyes grave. "I must have been born with the love of it in my heart. It has been my one passion since childhood. In sun or storm it possesses the same intense fascination over my mind. How cruel, gray, and dreary it all appears out there now, and yet it draws me like a magnet. I could remain here by the hour, doing nothing but gazing forth over those tumbling waters with the brooding leaden sky overhead, dreaming the dreams they bring me, forgetting everything under the magic of their eternal mystery. I know that sounds fanciful, like the speech of a school-girl, yet that is the fascination the sea exerts upon me. I never tire of it, and it must be that I possess the soul of the sailor." She clasped her hands more firmly about my arm. "Even this voyage, terrible as it has been, has brought with it some slight compensation for days and nights of misery; it has given me a view over this lonely waste of ice-guarded water, the very dreariness of which is a revelation."

"Was it because of your innate love for such things that Lord Darlington took to yachting?" I questioned curiously, always eager to observe her swift changes in expression. She laughed, with a queer little indrawing of breath and uplifting of lashes.

"Oh, no; far from it. He was an enthusiastic yachtsman long before we first met, but had contentedly confined his cruising to the English coast and the Mediterranean waters. No doubt it was my enthusiasm which induced him to attempt longer voyages and stranger seas. I lack interest in ordinary social life, and was far happier on board the yacht than in London drawing-rooms. His lordship was — was always most considerate."

The slight change of voice perceptible in this final sentence might have excused the utterance of the question trembling on my lips, yet I set my teeth, and remained silent.

"It is odd how our lives are influenced," she continued thoughtfully. "I feel that the charm of the sea has been the one great impelling force which has moulded mine. I wonder, is it destined to always be so? Are these waters even now bearing me on as Fate wills? Ever since I can remember I have permitted the ocean to take that place in my heart which, perhaps, should be otherwise occupied. It has been my master, my strongest love. But I must not think this, much less say it," hastily awakening, and pointing forward. "See, Mr. Stephens, how those clouds and the waters blend yonder in such fantastic forms; they appear an army of sheeted ghosts bearing down to block our passage into the Polar Sea."

I looked in the direction indicated, scarcely noting the phenomena, but wondering what was the real meaning concealed behind her veiled utterance. In truth Lady Darlington was not a woman easily interpreted. She

was by no means a creature of moods, yet behind her effort at outward cheerfulness I was constantly aware of something hidden, some haunting memory of the past, more to be dreaded even than her present environment. Occasionally some slight glimpse of her true self crept into word or glance, yielding me fresh conception of her real character; but any attempt to delve deeper was beyond my daring. About her presence was an impenetrable reserve, an influence as fascinating as it was discouraging. I knew her well in all outward ways; our converse together was frank with all the delightful freedom of old-time fellowship. Nevertheless, I felt myself a stranger, realizing that I was being held back from any full revelation of her true self. I was permitted to associate with the outer, but not the inner, woman, and even in our apparent intimacy remained baffled and perplexed.

Sometimes I even thought she deliberately played with me; yet this was not so. There was nothing of the coquette in her nature, nothing of purposeful deceit in either words or action, and I cast the unworthy thought from me with the indignation it deserved. Still, her method was most strange, most peculiar. Occasionally days would pass during which I would meet her only at the table in the presence of others, endeavoring to converse with Tuttle, and apparently almost oblivious of my presence. Then she would seem to seek me, conversing with eager freedom, walking with me upon the deck, or singing to me in the cabin. In the morning I could never guess what it was to be, — her ladyship changing with a suddenness almost startling. At times

her eyes fell beneath my glance, the long lashes securely veiling them, and her lips hesitated for words as though in deep embarrassment; then again she would greet me with open comradeship, in all the spirit of Bohemia, full of wit, cheery of speech, her laughter ringing with merriment. Indeed, she was like two women, ever keeping me on the *qui vive*, alive with expectancy, yet never quite bringing to me that open-heartedness I so much desired. One second, as though by purest accident, I looked down into her soul; the next I saw nothing but the outer covering. Without in the least meaning to be so she became a teasing puzzle, an enigma of womanhood, before whom I was beginning to worship, unable to analyze even my own feelings, half hopeful, half afraid.

Hence it was that on this day I remained leaning against the piano, listening to her really brilliant execution of difficult music, gazing down upon her unconscious face, the swing of the deck under my feet, but with a heavy heart behind the smile upon my lips. The music finally ceased, yet we lingered there conversing over the memory aroused by its rendition, when Tuttle emerged from his room, prepared for his turn of service on deck. He stopped and stared across at us, his hand on the knob of the closed door. The heavy sea-cap drawn low over his eyes, with the gray chin-beard forking out over the collar of his pea-jacket, caused his face to appear peculiarly peaked and old. How seamed it was with lines; how deeply the eyes were sunken beneath those heavily thatched brows!

"Such songs are most unseemly under our present circumstances," he said solemnly, apparently addressing

the lady only, for his glance never met mine. "In presence of death and the hereafter, madam, prayer is the natural outlet of the soul."

Her sympathetic face whitened, the expression of her eyes changing instantly.

"What — what do you mean, Mr. Tuttle? Are we in any special danger?"

"In midst of life we are in death. What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that Thou visitest him? Death rides upon the wind, races upon the waters. Place not your trust in princes, nor in any of the powers of earth, but upon the mercy of the Most High. Be warned, madam; be prepared for His early coming, for already has it been given unto me to behold the End."

He strode past us, stony-faced, his gaunt form outlined against the gray sky without as he pushed back the companion-door. Lady Darlington watched his disappearance with parted lips and eyes filled with fear. I rested my hand upon hers, gripping my teeth to keep back the explosion of an oath.

"The fellow has gone crazy over his spiritistic theories," I endeavored to explain. "Do not permit such folly to affect you."

"But — but, Mr. Stephens, he means it, he believes it. What is it he has seen?"

"Some vision of his insanity, no doubt — nothing that need worry us who are sane."

Her fingers pressed tightly upon my hand.

"But if he is really insane how much more dangerous it makes our position! Do you really think he is?"

"Only along that one line, Lady Darlington," my voice growing firm with conviction. "Otherwise he seems as sane as most men. We must humor him to that extent, but regarding all other matters there is no occasion for you to worry. The man is a magnificent seaman, and handles the *Sea Queen* with remarkable skill. He will bring us out safely, and you must not permit his prophecies of disaster to influence your mind — they are only the ravings of a diseased brain. The one thing for us to rely upon is his real ability to sail the yacht; regarding that there is no doubt."

I do not know how much of what I said she actually believed, yet as I talked on in apparent confidence her expression gradually changed, and finally I had Celeste bring her wraps, and I escorted her forth upon deck. The fresh, stinging air soon served to drive from her brain the last vestige of terror, although at first she watched Tuttle on the bridge very closely. However, the fellow had left his weird fancies all below, and his sharp orders, coupled with the able manner in which he sailed the vessel, rapidly brought back even my own evaporated faith. There were several bergs in sight, two rather small ones to starboard, and a huge monster on the opposite quarter, which glittered in all the colors of the rainbow, the great waves pounding along its base, and flinging volumes of spray high into the air. It appeared a veritable temple set afloat, with spires and minarets scraping the clouds, a stupendous mass, majestic and awe-inspiring. We watched it together for more than an hour, snuggled down in the lee of the cabin, until the monster slowly crept away into

the haze of the sea. Then, when we went down into the cabin at the call of Dade for lunch, the memory of the spectacle yielded us subject for converse at the table. Even Tuttle seemed to have had some of the gloom swept out of him by his experiences on deck, for he talked rationally enough of the many strange sights he had seen at sea. Indeed, as I remember now, the meal proved a most pleasant one, and we parted happily.

Lady Darlington did not appear again after supper, although Celeste sat in the main cabin and chatted vivaciously with De Nova while he ate. They appeared so deeply engrossed in each other that I finally took my pipe and went on deck, leaving them undisturbed, their laughter echoing to my ears as I slid to the companion-door. Intensely cold as it was in the stinging sweep of the wind, yet the awful fascination of those wide polar seas under the magic spell of the night shadows laid instant hold on my imagination, so that I lingered for an hour or more, sometimes pacing from rail to rail, as though on watch, or pausing to rest under the partial shelter of the long-boat. The cold, far-away stars peeped through rifts in the skurrying clouds, leaving little silvery reflections along the restless, tossing surface of the deep, while occasionally the moon burst forth also, rendering the scene almost ghastly with the drear gleam of ice perceptible along the horizon to south and west. The *Sea Queen* danced like a wild thing, with merely sufficient canvas spread to steady her, the water flashing in clouds over her forecastle rail, the decks icy to the main-hatch. There was a taste of snow in the wintry air, — delicate, scattered, whirling flakes that cut the

exposed flesh like needles, while the wind whistled through the frozen rigging in shrill music. The decks were as gloomy and dark as the surrounding sea was desolate and gray, the endless vista of circling water and sky merely merging imperceptibly into the haze of distance — everywhere the white-capped waves frantically chasing each other, crest following crest, the deep hollows between as black as death.

It got upon my nerves at last, and I went below, striving manfully to shake off all memory of the depressing picture. The cabin lamp had been turned so low that the room was left in dim shadow, but Dade had arranged the midnight luncheon on the table, with the decanter of brandy on the swinging shelf. I helped myself to a liberal glass, feeling chilled to the bone, and stood there a moment, listening to the dismal creak of wood and wondering if Lady Darlington could sleep amid such an infernal uproar. But of course she did; she had lived at sea far too long to be kept awake by so ordinary a commotion. It would be the sensible thing for me to do likewise, and ten minutes later I was securely braced in my bunk, so soundly sleeping I forgot to dream.

I could never tell what awoke me; some strange noise, no doubt, for I sat straight up, staring through the blackness toward the closed door. Almost at the very instant I heard the smash of glass in the main cabin. I was only partially undressed, and with one spring was at the latch, the fierce pitching of the yacht making me instantly apprehensive of accident. At the first glance I perceived nothing unusual under the dim light, then I

saw a man sprawling on the floor in midst of a litter of glass from a broken mirror. I leaped across toward the fellow, twisting my hand into the collar of his pea-jacket, and whirling him face upward to the light. It was Tuttle, and he shrank away from me, cowering like a whipped cur, his hands thrust out, his eyes staring. It was an appalling face, ghastly, terror-stricken.

"What is it, Mr. Tuttle?"

"Oh, Christ! Christ!" he shrieked, apparently never seeing me at all, his teeth gnashing, a foam on his lips. "I saw it again — right over there! But I killed that one! I killed that one! It will go back to hell ahead of me! Oh, God! there 's another! Another, but I 'll kill that one too!"

Straight toward me he came with the fierce, unexpected leap of a wild animal. Half dazed I grappled him. It was the contest of man against beast, for he fought clawing and snapping, snarling forth curses. The necessity of saving myself stiffened me to it, and I struck out hastily, landing twice before we came to the grip. It seemed to me he possessed the strength of a dozen men, yet I got my fingers in his neck-band, and we went crashing down together on the deck. As we struck he went suddenly limp, his fingers shaking, his eyes staring up dully at the light. I held him thus in my grip an instant, suspecting some trick; then, as he never moved, I drew him up until his shoulders rested against the support of a chair.

"What is it, man?" I questioned anxiously. "What has happened? Are you sick?"

He made no response, gave not the slightest sign that

he even heard me. I poured out a glass of liquor, held it to his lips, and he gulped it down, but seemingly in a stupor.

"Come along," I said sternly, realizing that my will must dominate his, if I would move him to action. "I am going to take you to your berth, and make you lie down. You are sick, and need rest. Get up, now."

He attempted no resistance as I lifted him, even clinging to the chair for support, his entire body shaking like a jelly fish. I braced him in through the open door, tumbled him over into the bunk, and he lay there, staring straight up with unwinking eyes, his face as yellow as parchment. He was completely dressed for the deck, his pea-jacket buttoned to the chin, his heavy sea-boots on. I unloosened the one, drew off the others, shut the door, and left him there alone. It was clear enough he had again beheld the ghost, but how came he to be fully dressed, his clothing still wet with the salt spray? Breathing hard from exertion, I glanced curiously at my watch to note the hour. Barely two o'clock. Why, it was his trick on deck; he had deserted his position to come below. The *Sea Queen* was rushing through the gloom with no officer on the bridge. De Nova would be in his bunk asleep. I sprang to my own room, and hastily finished dressing, fully determined on standing out Tuttle's watch on deck. As I came forth again into the main cabin, winding a muffler about my throat, a vision in white fronted me, grasping the table to keep from falling.

"What is it, Mr. Stephens? What has happened?"

"Nothing that need in any way alarm you," and as

the vessel gave a sickening plunge, and her eyes opened in apprehension, I caught her arm firmly. "Truly, believe me, there is no danger. Mr. Tuttle has been suddenly taken ill, and I am going to relieve him on watch. You have confidence in me, have you not?"

Her eyes searched my face earnestly, the gray depths full of anxiety.

"Oh, yes."

"Then now is the time to show it. I shall remain on deck, probably, until morning. I wish you to go back, lie down, and rest. Let me assist you to return to your state-room."

I held her closely to me, so closely I could feel the throb of her breathing, the warmth of her flesh, realizing that she was clinging to me in utter forgetfulness. Only at the door did she draw away slightly, yet even then with her hands clasping my arm, her eyes gazing directly into mine.

"You have told me all?"

"All of the slightest importance; the details can wait daylight. I ask you to confide in me now, and sleep. May I have your promise?"

There was something mystifying in those gray eyes I had never perceived before, and she caught her breath in a quick sob.

"Yes," she replied simply, her lashes drooping, "you may have my promise."

On deck I discovered the yacht laboring desperately in a heavy cross sea, the sky clear, and two men straining at the wheel. In spite of the starshine, they were so bundled up that I was compelled to stare directly in their faces before I could recognize either.

"Mr. Tuttle has been taken sick and gone to his berth," I explained briefly. "I will serve out his watch. What course have you?"

"Sou'-sou'-east by sou', sir."

I glanced inquiringly at the compass-card, and then forward, sweeping the seas with my glasses. There was no ice in sight, but the bitter cold of the air was sufficient proof of plenty not far away.

"She ought to ride her course easier with another reef in the foresail, I imagine, Johnson."

"She would that, sir; she's been buckin' fit to jerk the arms out of the two of us."

I bawled out the necessary orders, watching the men spring smartly from their coverts to the designated work.

"When did Mr. Tuttle go aft?" I asked.

"'Bout thirty minutes ago, sir."

"Did he leave any word?"

"He never said nothin', did he, Bill? He'd been actin' queer, an' a-talkin' to hisself, an' all at once he run down the steps, an' went aft. Bill an' I figured it out as how maybe he was cold, an' wanted a drink."

At four o'clock, the sky already beginning to mist as if from thickening frost, I despatched one of the hands aft to rout out De Nova. He came stumbling up the steps, perhaps ten minutes later, still rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, but became wide awake enough when he recognized me.

"*Sacre*, w'at was zis, Monsieur Stephens? W'ere was ze mate?"

Crouching behind the tarpaulins out of the keen

sweep of the wind, I explained in rapid detail what had occurred since he went below.

"It will probably have to be watch and watch with us, De Nova," I ended firmly. "Tuttle is no longer fit to be left in charge of the deck. You agree to that?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"By gar, it look like zare was nossing else for it."

"No; it is the only way. Call me at the end of your trick. I'll look in on Tuttle again as I go below."

I did so, discovering him still upon his back, his eyes wide open, staring straight up at the deck-beams above.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Tuttle?"

He wet his parched lips with his tongue, turning his head ever so slightly at sound of my voice.

"Another drink of brandy," he muttered thickly. "I don't see what is the matter with my legs; they won't move."

I brought him the liquor, lifting his head so he might drink more easily, and expressing a hope that he would feel much better by morning. He returned no answer, and I went across to my own berth and turned in.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH I AGAIN COME TO COMMAND

DADE awoke me, the gray light of the Antarctic day streaming in through the porthole.

"I pounded on the door twice, sir," he explained, quickly, "but you was sleepin' so hard I had to come in. Somethin' 's gone wrong in Mr. Tuttle's state-room, sir."

"Wrong! what do you mean?"

"Well, sir, a gun went off in there just now, an' —"

I was already upon my feet, pulling on my clothes.

"Run up on deck and ask De Nova to come down here at once. Lively now, my lad."

The two had already reached the foot of the companion-stairs when I came out, and Dade had evidently made the situation clear to the mind of the creole.

"Have you been in zare, monsieur?" he asked anxiously.

"No, not yet, but I fear the worst, and thought it would be better for us to go together. Stand by, Dade, for we may need you."

The ex-whaleman was lying on the floor in a curled-up heap, a revolver resting beside him, perhaps a foot from his hand. The pungent odor of powder was still in the room. We turned him over, revealing a bullet wound just in front of the ear. Beyond all doubt he had shot himself while sitting upon the edge of the bunk, and

had tumbled forward, dead before he struck the deck. I was impressed by the look upon his face; in some way he appeared younger, happier, than I ever remembered seeing him. I glanced toward De Nova, who stood staring silently down at the dead man, and at Dade, almost yellow with terror, peering cautiously in through the open door.

"He is beyond further trouble," I said solemnly. "The poor devil. Help me lift him back into his berth."

Dade held aloof, but De Nova took hold with me, and together we straightened out the body, covering it decently with a sheet. Then we passed out into the main cabin and closed the door.

"What sort of weather have we outside, Mr. De Nova?" I questioned, endeavoring to quell the beating of my heart.

"Clear an' col', monsieur, ze win' nor'west."

"Then we are holding our course?"

"*Oui, oui,*" gesticulating, "but w'at we do now? w'at we do now?"

"Well, that depends entirely upon you and the crew," I returned shortly. "Mr. Tuttle is dead, beyond recall. I am the only competent navigator left on board. For the sake of my own life, as well as the safety of those women in our care, I purpose assuming command. Have you anything to say?"

The creole stood motionless, grasping the edge of the table, his black eyes still fastened on Tuttle's closed door.

"Well, you had better decide," I went on stoutly, "and anyway the only thing for us to do is to put this

matter straight before the crew. Keep quiet about what has happened until after breakfast — you too, Dade — and then have the whole crew piped aft. Go on about your work until then, and keep your tongues still."

I sat down on the divan, watching Dade as he bustled about from the table to the pantry, ever casting furtive glances toward the silent state-room in which the dead man lay. I endeavored to reflect, to arrange the details of future action, but my mind remained confused, inactive. Finally I got up, and to Dade's horror reëntered the mate's room, returning with the chart upon which our course had been pricked up until noon of the previous day, and spread it out across my knees. I was still engaged in studying it when Lady Darlington, fully dressed, emerged from her cabin. She touched me before I was even aware of her presence.

"Is Mr. Tuttle still ill?" she questioned anxiously, "and have you been on duty all night?"

"The first officer is dead," I answered, and made her sit down beside me. "I will tell you all the facts."

She listened silently, her breath quickened from excitement, her face colorless. I dwelt upon the man's mental condition, his ghastly hallucinations, my discovery of him in the main cabin, and his final mad act of self-destruction. I felt it better to relate all this frankly, and my confidence in her womanly strength was fully justified. In spite of the horror visible in her eyes, she remained silent and motionless until I had uttered the final word. The very relating of the tragic story served to clear my own mind and strengthen my resolve.

"What — what will this mean to us?" she questioned,

her lips trembling. "Will it release us from our bondage? Will it result in abandoning this crazy search after treasure?"

"Honestly I do not know, Lady Darlington," I acknowledged with reluctance. "The present attitude of the crew remains to be discovered. Practically we are as helpless as before. My one advantage lies in the fact that I am the only navigator on board. Yet they have power to compel me to do their will. I can not battle against them alone."

"But you no longer believe in Tuttle's story?"

"I never have really believed it. But this is not a question of what I believe; it all hangs upon the faith of the men forward."

"But if they realize he was insane, surely they must also decide that his treasure ship was likewise a delusion."

I shook my head, gravely doubting her conclusion.

"I regret to say I possess no such expectation. The average sailor, Lady Darlington, is not given to reasoning; he is more a creature of impulse. I fear we are already too close to our goal to now be turned back by the mate's death. The men will insist on completing the voyage. I intend to have the entire crew piped aft after breakfast, and will talk to them. I wish you to go on deck with me at that time, and hear all that is said." I paused, intently watching the expression of her face. "Whatever decision I may be driven to, I hope it will not forfeit me your respect."

"Oh, no."

"You will retain confidence in me, even if the bow of the *Sea Queen* continues to point southward?"

She lifted her gray eyes to mine in unshadowed frankness.

"Whatever you think best, Mr. Stephens, I shall believe to be right," she responded softly. "Will my trust help you?"

"It is the one thing needed. Thus armed I can fight it out."

The meal following was far from cheerful, although the bright sun streamed down through the deck transom to fall in golden bars along the table, as our thoughts would constantly recur to that silent figure lying in the near-by bunk, while our conversation was largely about him, and the consequences of his death. Endeavor as we might to discover more enlivening topics, yet we invariably veered back in a moment or two to the old course. We could not even drive our minds away.

Finally, bidding both mistress and maid prepare themselves for an early call to the deck, I went forward to the bridge, relieving De Nova while he descended to the main cabin for his breakfast. The crew had already completed their meal and swarmed out of the forecastle, apparently aware that something was in the wind. Most of them remained grouped forward of the main-hatch, no doubt puzzled at discovering me on the bridge, and wondering why the port watch had not been sent below. News travels rapidly on board ship, however you seek to hide it, and in all probability rumors of what had occurred during the night had already been whispered about the forecastle. I noticed big Bill Anderson circulating among the various groups, talking earnestly, and felt convinced the crew was endeavoring to settle upon

some united course of action. Brutal and unlearned as he was, the boatswain was a thorough sea-lawyer, understanding well how to influence his mates, and with enough at stake in this game to render him desperate. The second mate joined me.

"Call all hands aft, Mr. De Nova," I said, after a glance into his face, "every man Jack of them, except the two at the wheel. I will talk to them from the rail."

I took my position there, with Lady Darlington and Celeste close at hand, but somewhat sheltered under the lee of the long-boat from the stinging wind. The herd came shuffling aft, and ranged themselves awkwardly enough on the open deck. De Nova cast his eyes over them, counting, then climbed the short ladder and joined me.

"All here, monsieur." Then lowered his voice. "Mapes was dead in ze fo'c'stle."

"Mapes! Oh, he was the man who fell from the foreyard?"

"*Oui*, an' it all makes ze crew feel scare'."

I glanced at the group beneath, and around at the stern vision of sea. Altogether it formed a dismal, disheartening picture, — the men, bundled up in their heavy clothing, stomping their feet on the deck, their ragged beards forking out, their eyes gleaming beneath the peaks of woollen caps drawn low, shuffling impatiently, and occasionally moving over to the rail to spit; the yacht, long battered by the seas, stripped of every unnecessary adornment, her hatches battened down, her funnel rusty, her sails close reefed, her forward deck a

sheet of glistening ice, the sharp wind whistling through the frozen rigging as she staggered through a cold, gray, wintry sea, straining and groaning in every timber as the gleaming surges struck her quarter and the relentless wheel held her to the course. On either side extended the ice-fields, white and glistening under the dull sun, with narrow lanes of bluish-gray water traversing them in odd, criss-cross fashion, the ceaseless heave of the sea continually opening and closing these channels through the pack, and forcing clouds of spray high into the air. Above the dismal whine of the wind we could hear the thunder of crunching ice bodies, as the huge, floating masses ground together, upheaving great hummocks above the level, or dropping splintered edges splashing into the sea. Our own track lay fairly clear, except for scattered, dancing cakes, an open channel of gray, churning water, stretching like a majestic river into the southeast, the crests of raging seas heaving and tossing under the sun rays. The whole view photographed itself indelibly upon my mind, and I clung to the rail, gazing about and down into those upturned faces below.

"Men," I said finally, shadowing my lips with one hand to keep the words from being blown away, "I am no sea orator, and what I have to say will be short. No doubt you know pretty well already what has happened on board during the night. All I need say is, that Mr. Tuttle is dead; he went crazy and shot himself. Now the reason I called you aft is this. You are no regular articled crew, on an ordinary voyage between ports. None of you have signed papers, and you have no lawful officers to take charge. It happens I 'm the only navigator on

board, and so I 've called you aft, after talking with Mr. De Nova about it, to get your ideas on what ought to be done. Some of you speak up until we can find out what your notions are."

No one among them made any response, the long row of eyes staring dully up at me, the feet shuffling in uneasiness.

" Come, Anderson, open up. You 've been sounding the men for an hour past. What 's your plan? "

The boatswain, thus directly singled out from the others, pushed his way to the front, glancing sideways into the faces of his mates.

" Well, we have talked about it a bit, Mr. Stephens, but I dunno as we 've quite decided," his gruff voice borne to us on the wind. " How far are we from them islands what Mr. Tuttle told about? "

" Nearly two hundred miles to the northwest."

The big sailor cast his eyes over the side at the sea view, slowly turning the quid in his cheek.

" An' the wind right. 'T ain't much of a run, sir, after what we 've already had gettin' here. I reckon you could find that p'int o' sea? "

" Yes," I acknowledged almost reluctantly, " I can find it, unless the ice shuts us in first. But what 's the use in taking such a chance, Anderson? Tuttle was probably just as crazy about that matter as he was over other things. To my mind he never saw any islands where he said he did. Government ships have surveyed all these waters again and again, and the charts show no land anywhere along that latitude. I 'm for calling it a poor job, and turning back before we get nipped. Look

where we are now; we have n't a mile of clear water either side of us, and a shift of wind will crush our sides like an eggshell."

The silent men stared gloomily out at that grim expanse of sea, ice, and sky, but Anderson only scowled up into my face, slapping his mittened hands together.

"To hell wid that sort o' rot, Mr. Stephens," he broke forth fiercely. "We 're sailor-men, an' the most of us have seen ice before. This channel 's wide enough for the hooker, an' what the devil do we want more? Maybe the ol' man was a bit nutty, but he knew how to sail these seas, an' he told a dam' straight yarn about that Spanish ship, just the same, an' I 'm for findin' out whether or not it was a lie. We 've come a hell of a long ways down here without no pay; we 've took our lives in our hands to get here, an' maybe we 'll rot in prison when we go back. Maybe there ain't no *pesos* awaitin' for us out yonder, but, by God, sir, I want to know it for sure. An' so do my mates. Now you say we 're within two hundred miles of findin' out the truth, an' I 'm hanged if I 'll consent to go back like a whipped cur without takin' even a squint along that latitude. Hell, we don't need Tuttle to show us the place we started out after, an' if the rhino is there, why, the rest of us will get more of it with him dead than alive. That 's what I say, sir, say it dam' plain, an' that 's the idee of my mates."

He stomped on the deck, glowering about him like a mad bull, evidently daring the others to contradict. I leaned farther out over the rail.

"Is that right, lads? Has Anderson spoken your

sentiments? Do you really mean to proceed in this crazy search in spite of all that ice out yonder?"

No voice responded, although I could hear the hoarse grumbling in their throats and see their heads shaking affirmatively. I turned toward the mate, who was standing just behind me.

"The men are all tongue-tied. How is it with you, Mr. De Nova? Are you for further south, or a quick run home?"

I noticed him glance across toward Celeste, crouching beneath the shelter of the long-boat, her face showing white against the darker background. I even imagined the girl lifted her hand as if in some form of signal; anyhow, the creole smiled confidently, his jet moustaches clearly outlined against his cheek.

"W'at I say, monsieur? Oh, *oui;* I was for get up ze steam in ze engine, an' make a dash. By gar, maybe zare was ze monies to make us all rich. W'y not? Wiz ze steam we cheat ze ice-field. Bah! I seen it worse as zat."

"True," I urged in final effort, "but the season is wrong. We are driving south in the face of winter, the ice-packs are forming, and not breaking up. I warn every one of you the chances are we 'll be nipped."

"We can make it easy in three days, Mr. Stephens," broke in Anderson, loudly. "If we only have decent weather, we could rip up that old hooker, copper the swag, and be north-bound in that time. It ain't goin' to be such a hell of a job. A steamer ain't like a sailin' vessel, sir, an' this lane o' clear water won't close until the wind changes."

I never glanced toward him, my eyes still on the mate.

"But the women, De Nova?"

He was looking at them, and, following his eyes, I turned also. Celeste was bending eagerly forward, her dark eyes sparkling with excitement; her mistress stood erect, grasping the edge of the long-boat, her face flushed by the keen wind, her lips firmly pressed together.

"I sink zat maybe zey vote wiz ze crew, monsieur," smiled the creole, pleasantly.

Lady Darlington reached one hand out for the rail, her skirts flapping, her hair blowing free beneath her hat.

"It will be best for us to go on, Mr. Stephens," she said quietly. "The men will never be satisfied otherwise; and I do not blame them. Too much has been risked already to turn back at the last moment because of a little additional peril. Nor am I willing it should be done merely to spare us a few more days of discomfort. We must take our chances, and as for myself I trust absolutely in your seamanship."

There was a growl of appreciation from below, Anderson's voice shouting up hoarsely, "You're the right stuff!" but I stood there in silence, gazing at her in astonishment, feeling deserted by every one, and realizing that the entire responsibility was now mine. Gripping the rail, my glance wavered from her face down upon the herd of men below, totally unable to control my voice or express my thought. More clearly than any among them I comprehended the peril fronting us, the desperate chance we were about to take, the casting of dice with death. Yet what was there left for me to do? Absolutely nothing: the choice had been made.

"Is it understood I am in command?"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Very well, then," I said, "you have chosen your bed, now you will lie in it. Mr. De Nova, get the stokers below and start the fires. We 'll push her for it hard. You men stand by for a double funeral in an hour; we have a dead man fore and aft. Now step lively, my bullies!"

I watched them as they scattered like so many schoolboys at play, Anderson and De Nova driving them to their various tasks. A hand touched my arm gently.

"I hope you are not angry, Mr. Stephens. Did I do so very wrong?"

I looked down into her gray eyes filled with appeal, and felt my face brighten.

"Frankly, I do not know," I replied honestly. "Of course I could not hope to oppose all the crew, but we are taking a terrible chance. I appreciate your courage, Lady Darlington, and shall do my best to justify your confidence in my seamanship. But you must go below, out of this wind. Permit me to assist you down the ladder."

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH WE BURY OUR DEAD

LOW, rapidly moving clouds, rising from the westward, brought with them a flurry of snow, the stinging particles blown almost horizontally by the fierce wind, yet within a few moments they powdered the decks and so completely blotted out the surrounding sea that we were compelled to strain shaded eyes to perceive even dimly where the spray leaped high along the edge of the ice-field. Black smoke was already trailing from out our funnel in ever increasing volume, the steadily revolving screw was driving the yacht forward with new power, and the only bit of canvas showing was the close-reefed jib, left as an aid to the wheelsmen. While I could remain in charge on the bridge I drove the *Sea Queen* to the full capacity of her engines, my glasses diligently searching for safe passageways down the narrowing lane of green water yet open before us. But as the time approached for our burial service, and De Nova came forward to relieve me, it was thought best to shut down to a mere steerage-way, so that all the crew might gather amidships in memory of their departed comrades.

I searched the after-cabins thoroughly for a copy of the Scriptures, or any book containing the burial service. One might possibly have been discovered hidden away

in the locked chests, but I did not feel authorized to break these open on such quest, and so returned to the deck with nothing to guide me in the services to be conducted. The boatswain, assisted by two seamen, had prepared the bodies for their last long voyage, and while the crew gathered in a body on the snow-covered deck, the dead, shrouded beneath white sheets, were silently borne forth from cabin and forecastle, and placed reverently upon planks balanced across the rail. Weights were attached to the feet of each, while two sailors were stationed ready to tilt the planks, when the signal should be given to consign the bodies to the deep.

I should greatly have preferred Lady Darlington to remain below during the ceremonies. There is much depression about such burial scenes at sea, especially so in our circumstances and surroundings. But she insisted upon being present, and so at the last moment I returned to the cabin and escorted both her and Celeste to the deck. It was a dismal, melancholy scene, and I did not wonder at the slight shiver with which her ladyship glanced about. The swiftly descending snow, the whitened decks, trampled beneath the feet of the men, the bare spars overhead; the low flying, dun-colored clouds; the gray, tumbling waters; the low growl of the ice as the waves battered its front; the silent semicircle of men standing motionless except for their shuffling feet; and those two white-draped figures lying extended across the rail, — all combined to form a grim sea-picture the memory of which can never dissolve.

Protected somewhat from the sharp wind by the cabin the men had flung aside their mufflers, so that their

weather-beaten faces, most of them heavily bearded, were plainly revealed. I could not but be impressed with the motley crowd, as the lineaments of negro, Kanaka, and every variety of white degenerate were thus exposed. Not but that honest faces were conspicuous in the line, but, as a whole, I doubt if any pirate chief ever looked upon a chosen crew more fit to do his pleasure. Surely Tuttle had made no mistake in these choice spirits whom he had enlisted for his desperate enterprise. These were men who would front hell, smiling and cursing, if only the reward was sure. Now Tuttle was dead, it depended upon me to control the *Sea Queen*. I must master these beauties, and bring those women safely back to civilization. It caused my heart to beat rapidly as the reality of the problem came before me — my eyes wandering from the two sheeted forms, down the faces of the impatient crew, to where the women stood together under the overhang of the cabin. Gloomy, awe-inspiring as the whole grim scene was, none there could comprehend its full significance as clearly as I did. The responsibility which had come upon me with Tuttle's death brought also new vision of the peril; I dreaded both the ice without and the men within.

Their uneasy, shuffling feet, and the impatience depicted on their faces, aroused me to the requirements of the moment. I advanced to the rail, standing beside the corpse of the mate.

"Lads," I said soberly, "when we bury shipmates at sea there is a solemnity about the simple ceremony unknown to the land. Far away from friends and home we give the body up to the great ocean to keep for

eternity. Even more solemn and impressive than usual is such service held here amid the untravelled solitudes of the Antarctic, the threatening fields of ice closing us in, and the snow whitening our decks. Yet we are sailors, long accustomed to the vicissitudes and perils of the deep; we have parted with shipmates before in many seas, and not a few among you look forward to the time when comrades will be called upon to perform a similar service of respect over your bodies. Even now we sail forward into great danger, and none among us can prophesy what the morrow may bring of either life or death. Yet the sea is the sailor's sepulchre, the roar of the great waves his requiem. I am no sea preacher, able to address you upon the hereafter, or fitted to eulogize the spirits of those whose bodies we are about to bury. You desire nothing of the kind. Neither can I read over these forms the usual burial service, for I can find no book containing it on board. Is there any one among you, mates, who will voice a prayer before we drop these bodies overboard?"

I looked along the semicircle of faces, expecting nothing from the members of the crew, yet faintly hopeful that some one or two might be led to respond. No one stirred, however, the only sound on board the wind whistling through the rigging and the heavy breathing of the men.

"Well, then," I added regretfully, "nothing remains but to commit their bodies to the deep, and may God have mercy on their souls!"

I lifted my hand in signal, but even as I did so Lady Darlington spoke, the men who were about to tilt the planks pausing in wonderment.

"Wait, Mr. Stephens; not without one word of prayer. Let me speak it, if no one else will."

She came forward, throwing back her veil, and grasping my sleeve to retain steady footing on the heaving deck. For an instant there was an impressive silence; then her voice arose, low yet distinct, trembling to the accent of reverent prayer. I know not what she said: merely the simple breathing upward of a petition to the Almighty Father for pardon and guidance; yet never before did faith lay such mighty hold upon me. It was short, only a few faltering sentences, but the honesty of it, the faith so clearly evidenced in both words and face, impressed the roughest there. She paused, her head still lowered; I heard some one say "Amen" solemnly, and raised my hand in signal. Noiselessly the ends of the planks were uptilted, and the two sheeted figures slid downward into the gray water. Instantly they disappeared beneath the unfathomable depths. So silently and expeditiously was this accomplished that she even failed to note the action, lifting her eyes wonderingly to the bare planks, and with a choking sob burying her face in her hands. Without venturing a word I led her gently to the companion. Five minutes later I stood again upon the bridge, the deck beneath throbbing to the pulse of the released engine, as the *Sea Queen* raced recklessly forward through the ice-girded waters in desperate effort to attain her goal.

The snow had now ceased falling, but the wind veered more to the north, drifting the great ice-floes down upon our port quarter, and threatening to close us in. At full speed we raced for it, the sharp stem of the yacht hurling aside the detached cakes in our path, although

"HER voice arose, low yet distinct, trembling to the accents of reverent prayer."

occasionally encountering a resistance jarring the whole fabric of the vessel. Great lumps went crunching along the sides, scraping and bumping, until they dropped away astern, yet fortunately the rudder escaped serious injury and the screw worked steadily. However, it was touch and go, the deadly grind of those closing ice masses astern borne to us on the wind, the dash of spray along their edges flung high above the deck. Every instant for an hour I thought the end had come, expecting to hear the crash of those awful ice jaws rending our steel sides and jamming us into pulp. But we made it, rounding that last ice cape by so narrow a margin that I could have leaped the gulf, and swept out into the open blue water, gazing back horror stricken to watch the hummocks pile up as the immense mass ground together, with a roar reverberating through the solitudes like a thousand peals of thunder. For the time, at least, we were free, and with limbs trembling under me from the terrific strain, I called De Nova to the bridge and went below into the cabin so thoroughly exhausted I could barely pour out a glass of brandy before flinging myself, still fully dressed, upon the bunk.

The stretch of open water held, although lashed into fury by the increasing weight of wind, which served, however, to force back the fields of ice. The heavy drift cost us something, yet the mate held the yacht's nose down to it, taking the dash of water over the port rail until the deck was a glare of ice, and the crew had to chop their way into the forecastle. They permitted me to sleep until the change of watch, and when I finally came on deck again the night shadows were already resting over the wild scene, yielding to it a sombreness beyond description.

We seemed alone in all the universe. I clawed my way forward to the bridge, everything I touched a glare of ice, the ropes and spars, even the funnel encrusted, the iron rails twice their natural size. De Nova's oilskins were stiff with it, and his moustache glittered in the yellow flame of the binnacle lamp. He appeared so thoroughly worn, that I detained him only long enough to inquire the course, and bade him get below in a hurry.

It was not a dark night, for the stars were out — such cold, dead stars they seemed, — and a little later I knew the moon would come stealing up above the waste of waters, yet there was a haze hovering all about us, as though the entire surrounding atmosphere was thick with frost. I crouched down behind the slight protection of the tarpaulins, sweeping the horizon with my glasses, but discovering nothing to awaken alarm. The ice was being steadily driven ahead of us, and the slight easterly slant we succeeded in holding between the wind squalls served to keep it well off our starboard quarter. Indeed I could perceive nothing of the floes, although the spectral gleam of several bergs was distinctly visible. But the fierce sea pounded us unmercifully, and together with the wind, continually slewed our head to the southward in spite of the three men jamming down the wheel. There were times when I yelled to them to let her pay off, fearful lest she actually turn turtle under the mighty force smiting her. I saw nothing of the watch, except as I called for them. Then they came, clawing their way out of the snug holes where they hid from wind and water. However, there was little enough for any of us to do; we could simply hold on, trusting

in the strength of the keel under us, and sheering to eastward of the ice-pack. It was a wild, mad night, the wind freezing to the marrow, and every wave dashing its icy spray hurtling against the front of the wheelhouse. At eight bells I went below again, every muscle of my body aching, and my face tingling as though pierced by a thousand needles. I sat down before the red-hot stove in the cabin, thinking I should never get the cold thawed out of me. Yet inside of ten minutes, with head resting on the chair-back, and legs extended to keep my balance, I was sound asleep.

Whether a sudden leap of the vessel or some unusual noise aroused me I cannot say. Dazed, confused, I sat upright, staring about me, for the moment scarcely realizing where I was. Dade had turned down the flame of the lamp while I slept, and the entire cabin was in semi-darkness, the black shadows of the furniture assuming strange shapes in the gloom, while all beyond the mast-butt was impenetrable. I could hear the fierce pounding of the sea without, the shrieking of wind through the cordage, and the rattle and groaning of the woodwork as the struggling vessel dived into the hollows and fought her way back to the crests. A shower of hail lashed the windows, rattling like shot against the shutters. As I glanced backward across my shoulder, I heard, above all that hellish uproar, a hollow, unearthly groan. I was upon my feet in an instant, grasping at the edge of the table, striving vainly to place the sound. For some cause I could not keep my eyes off Tuttle's door, every nerve pulsing with agony. Was it imagination, illusion? By all the gods, I beheld a white visionary form glide

noiselessly forth and disappear as though dissolved in mist. It was certainly there, yet, in another instant, had vanished, I knew not how. I stared about into the dim corners, then leaped toward the door, seeking to open it. It was locked; of course it was, for the key was in my own pocket.

Many times I have known fear, but not such fear as this which now smote me. Here was something intangible, something I could not reach and throttle, a dim, frightful shade, coming from God alone knew whence. I pressed my hands to my head, and endeavored to laugh, to woo back my courage. Great Heavens, was I also losing my mind? Was I to be haunted and pursued by evil fancies? Had the curse of this ship now descended upon me? A plunge of the vessel sent me sprawling upon the deck, yet the very jar of the fall brought me back my senses. Ghosts! I believed in nothing of the kind; true, I had imbibed many a superstition of the sea, but never yet the stories of haunted ships. I staggered to my feet, holding on desperately to the table, seized the decanter from off the swinging shelf, and drank deeply. Lord, what grim fancies a man may have when the physical organism is unstrung! I glanced at my watch, discovering I still had two hours below, and crossed over to my state-room, nerving myself to play the man, yet glancing about fearfully into the dancing shadows. I laughed as I closed the door, but shot the bolt hard, and lay there for an hour listening, every nerve a-tingle, before fatigue finally closed my eyes.

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH WE FIGHT SHADOWS

IN the gray of the morning, memory of that illusion of the night before angered me. I was thoroughly ashamed of the terror which had overwhelmed my senses, and ambitious to prove how little superstition could affect my conduct. I even told the story of my adventure to Lady Darlington at the breakfast table, dwelling on the humor of it, and amused myself in noting how the mental picture I drew appeared to fascinate her. In truth, I failed completely to leave the impression desired, and the pallor of her face, the pleading in her eyes, remained with me even after I had mounted to the deck. I had, inadvertently, brought to her ladyship a new cause of worry, a new fear, and I despised myself heartily for such thoughtlessness. Yet even this knowledge served to stiffen my own resolve. De Nova met me at the foot of the steps leading up to the bridge, his face careworn, his eyes heavy from long hours on watch.

"Fortune still appears to favor us," I remarked, sweeping my hand around the horizon. "If the wind will only continue to hold in that quarter for another twenty-four hours we will learn the truth of what Tuttle saw. You are still heading east of south?"

"Ay, ay, monsieur," and the mate clung to the rail as the *Sea Queen* leaned over under a sudden puff. "We

are making way all right, wiz ze ice drifting faster as we travel. Zat was good, but I not like very much w'at happen on board — by gar, *non!*"

"Why, what is that?"

"I sink maybe we be in for a hell of a time wiz ze crew; it was get bad 'nough already."

"The crew? Come, speak out plainly what you mean, De Nova. The fellows are well fed and well housed; they are having everything their own way, and against my judgment. Now what's the trouble?"

The creole threw back his muffler, brushing off the icicles clinging to his moustaches. He glanced toward me almost shamefacedly, and off across the tumbling water.

"Well, ze trouble was wiz ze ship, monsieur," he confessed finally. "Ze dam' ship was haunted."

I felt my heart leap upward into my throat, yet only continued to stare at him in silence. The mate swallowed, as if something in his throat choked him.

"By gar, monsieur, I donno nothing about it, but zat is ze talk for'ard. Johnson, he tol' me first w'en he come to ze w'eel. I thought maybe it was a sailor yarn, an' so I ask Bill Anderson, an' he say it was all true; he say he see ze spook wiz his own eyes at four bells, an' ze way he tell about it make ze flesh creep. *Sacre*, it do zat! I sink maybe we have much troubles pretty soon — somebody sure die before zat ghost leave. W'at you sink, monsieur?"

I now had myself well in hand and all fear of ghostly visitants had disappeared, swept from my mind by the return of daylight and this call to combat the terror of

others. I knew sailors, and how their superstitions overcame all courage. I comprehended also that it would never do for me to yield to this crew again; another surrender would rob me completely of all semblance of authority on board. This was a time for exercising the strong hand. I must either command now, or else permit the *Sea Queen* to be ruled by the mob. If Anderson and his mates found they could do as they pleased, could dictate, then discipline would be over with.

"What do I think?" I echoed, laughing in the mate's troubled face. "Why, that those fellows are a parcel of fools frightened at a night shadow. Come, De Nova, have done with that sort of truck, and stand by to clap a stopper on such talk. Go below now, get some sleep, and clear the fog out of your head."

"You sink you laugh it avay, but maybe it not be so easy. Will you speak to ze men?"

"Oh, I'll have a talk with the fellows in my watch, and if necessary I'll call all hands."

He went below reluctantly enough, and it was clearly evident I could count upon little assistance from him in this emergency. Ghost lore was in his blood, and the weird stories of the forecastle had found fruitful soil within his imagination. I walked over to the lee rail, staring out across the dismal scene, yet scarcely seeing it, as I struggled with the requirements of this fresh problem. Of one thing I was assured, I had better tackle the matter at once; every moment of delay would give birth to new fancies in the forecastle and the growth of a deeper fear, more difficult to eradicate. The watch were grouped under the overhang of the forecastle, with some

fellow talking to them earnestly, his broad back turned toward me. I walked forward, and some one warned the speaker of my approach. He stopped instantly, wheeling about. It was big Bill Anderson.

"Anderson," I said sharply, my eyes hardening, "I supposed you were on duty in the engine-room. What are you doing up here?"

The man's red face turned purple, and I could see his fingers clench in their heavy gloves. He hated me, and with some good reason, but he was not quite ready to declare open war.

"I left Larsen on watch below, sir," he returned hoarsely. "I wanted a word or two with my mates."

"Yes," I retorted swiftly, "you wanted a word with your mates, you great hulking coward; you wanted to tell them about that ghost again, I suppose. You 're a pretty sailor, afraid of the dark, making shadows into spooks like a kid, and then trying to frighten your shipmates with the story. Get below at once, and if I hear another word out of you, you 'll be doing a ghost-act yourself."

"Don't talk like that to me," he snarled, leaning forward threateningly, "for I don't take it — see! This ain't no regular voyage where a sailor-man is a dog; an' besides, you ain't no officer."

"I 'm officer enough for this job, boatswain. I 'm captain here by your votes, and if you dispute my authority I 'll teach you a lesson not easily forgotten. You big fool, lay hands on me, and every man Jack of you will die here in the ice. There is no one else on the *Sea Queen* who can bring you out of these waters."

"But I saw — I saw the — the thing, sir, and so did Coleman."

"Oh, did you?" I ran my eyes over their faces. "So you also had a call from the spook, Coleman. Was it a pleasant-looking ghost, my lad?"

The fellow thus singled out shuffled uneasily, wetting his lips with his tongue.

"It was all white, sir," he stammered reluctantly, "a-standin' at the foot o' Johnson's bunk, an' then it sort o' faded away into the deck."

"Quite the proper thing for a ghost to do. Well, I suppose you fellows have talked it all over. What's the programme?"

No one among them appeared anxious to speak, but the whole watch glanced toward Anderson, and at last that worthy found tongue.

"We think it's a warnin', sir," he said, the coarse growl gone from his voice. "Death's waitin' for us down in the south yonder, an' now we're for turnin' back afore it's too late."

"And leaving the treasure?"

"Damn the treasure! By God, I don't half believe there is any; anyhow, we ain't crazy enough to give up our lives just to get sight of it."

"Is that what you all think?"

The men nodded, grumbling in their throats.

"Well now, lads, listen to what I say," and I whipped off my gloves, ramming them in my pockets, so as to have my hands free. "Two days ago you fellows would n't listen to any reason; in spite of hell and my protests you were determined upon going to 66° 17′

south latitude to look for the *Donna Isabel.* You were all against me then to a man, and I had to yield. Then you elected me captain, and pledged yourselves to obey my orders. Now, men, you 're going to do it, if I have to kill every man Jack among you. Do you understand *that!* Ghost or no ghost the *Sea Queen* is going to the very spot where Tuttle said he saw that Spanish ship. I don't expect to find anything there except ice and water, but there is where this yacht goes before ever she heads north again. If you fellows talk any more mutiny on board I 'll handle you hard. Don't forget that! Twenty-four hours more will put us there, if the breeze holds; the wind is drifting the ice south, and we 've got clear water. You fools can see a thousand ghosts if you want to, but the bow of the *Sea Queen* points exactly where it does now, until I give orders to change the course. Those are my words, and you can tell the port watch what I say."

It was plainly evident they did not like it, yet no one among them cared to answer me, and I realized that as the only navigator on board I held the whip-hand. Nothing else ever held those savage mongrels to silence.

"Now get below, Anderson; and you others stand by."

I climbed slowly to the bridge and leaned over the rail, looking down on the deck. Big Bill growlingly disappeared down the hatch-ladder, and his mates were talking it over in a bunch at the lee rail. If they were visited by any more ghosts the probability was they would revolt in earnest, and I should have my hands full; but then there were only twenty-four hours more

of the strain. I could certainly hold them to it for that length of time, and thus assure my authority upon the voyage northward. It was well worth the struggle to feel myself actually in command. The knowledge that I held these men in my power, in the hollow of my hand, and that they knew it, served to strengthen my character, stiffen my resolve. I meant to conquer and control.

In some way, with this feeling of exultation pulsing through me, I no longer experienced that same fear of pushing south at this season. The terror of the day before had vanished. Then, racing between closing ice-floes, and escaping by the barest margin, I would have given worlds to have driven free into warmer waters. But now, with the ice driven to the southward, the gray, cold ocean stretching clear before us, all my lost courage returned, and with it came renewed confidence that I could yet extricate the yacht from all the perils of this grim polar sea. Ye gods, how fate plays with men, leading them on along pleasant paths, until all too late they discover where they end! The low, dun-colored clouds, the restless surge of the waters, the far-away blink of ice, gave me no warning; the barometer in the cabin hung steady, the wind had lost its piercing coldness, its dismal whine of wintry storm. Everything invited to endeavor, and the wheelsmen at my order whirled their spokes to head the *Sea Queen* more directly to the southward, racing straight toward the ice-blink and into the lair of the polar night.

Should I speak to Lady Darlington further relative to these strange occurrences on board? No; at least not

now; later, perhaps, when we had reached safer waters, when even the men had forgotten their hallucination. Then we could laugh over it together, but just now it somehow did not seem altogether a laughable matter, even to me. I might wax sarcastic over the crude superstition of the forecastle, but I was unable to blot entirely from memory the haunting vision which had confronted me aft. Nevertheless when De Nova relieved me I was in rare good humor, inclined to make light of the forebodings of disaster he had conjured up during his quiet hours below. I told him of my talk with the men, of my firm determination to press forward, and pointed out cheerfully the wide expanse of open sea, unvexed by ice. He was no coward, the creole, and my own high spirits speedily brought him back to eagerness and audacity. I can see still the deepening sparkle in his eyes, the returning jauntiness with which he curled his little black moustaches. And so I left him to the loneliness of his watch, humming a gay love song, all gloom blown away on the north wind.

I bore this same light spirit below, laughing and joking with my lady at the table, teasing Celeste for a dance, and making light of our environment, until I aroused them both to fresh confidence in the happy termination of our voyage. It is a pleasant scene to dwell upon — that lonely yacht cabin, with the cold, ice-locked seas of the stormy Antarctic without; the brilliant lamp overhead, its jewels gleaming, shedding softened rays over the silver-decked table, and the gorgeous furnishings of that home-like interior; Dade bustling about, smiling at the scraps of conversation; Celeste laughing merrily,

and leaning eagerly forward, her curly hair shaking, her roguish eyes alight with keen enjoyment; and my lady, more quiet and reserved, yet quick at repartee, her fine face reflecting her mood, her gray eyes meeting mine in all the frankness of recognized fellowship. Only after Celeste had retired upon some errand and Dade was busied in his pantry did I realize that she also played a part in this tragicomedy — that beneath the happy smile hid a heart still troubled and dissatisfied. She suddenly bent forward, her hands clasped, her face sobered.

"Mr. De Nova has been telling Celeste that the men are growing dissatisfied, discontented — that they say the yacht is haunted. Please tell me if this is true."

"They are filled with superstition, like all deep-water sailors," I answered, surprised, yet succeeding in speaking lightly. "However, I have put a quietus on their fears for the present."

"Then they do believe this?"

"Why, yes. Anderson and Coleman have been spinning yarns and got their mates well scared. They saw some shadows last night, and made ghosts out of them. Even De Nova was a bit nervous a few hours ago, but the whole matter has been quieted down. Surely you do not believe in such things?"

Her lips did not smile, nor her eyes, but her bosom rose and fell rapidly to her breathing.

"I can not truly say that I believe or disbelieve," she answered soberly. "I have faith in God and the hereafter; I do not know what mystery lies between. Yet I have no conception of evil spirits haunting us such as those poor sailors feel." She arose to her feet, yet

lingered beside the table, looking across at me. "But I wish to be trusted, Mr. Stephens; I desire to be told when you are in trouble of this kind. Surely you do not consider me unworthy, or so lacking in courage that I must be amused like a child?"

"Can not you grant me a higher motive, Lady Darlington? Is it not possible I hoped thus to protect you from unnecessary worry?"

"Oh, of course. I realize that and fully appreciate your purpose, but I wish to be trusted; I desire to be a help, not a hindrance to you. Could I not speak to the men? Could I not have some influence over them?"

I smiled slightly, noting her kindling cheeks, the eagerness of her eyes.

"You could certainly influence their captain," I said thoughtlessly. The long lashes instantly drooped, the flush deepening.

"But — but you believe the crew beyond my power?"

"I should hardly dare say that, but it requires force rather than love to control a ship's deck. No doubt Jack would listen to you with much respect, though he would still believe in his ghost, but I possess a club which he really fears. I chance to be the only navigator on board; the life of every man lies in my hands, and these lads know it. That is why you need not fear the crew; they will do exactly as I bid them, because they dare do nothing else. You were going to your cabin?"

She inclined her head, even holding out her hand for me to steady her along the reeling deck. At the door she glanced up suddenly into my eyes.

"You possess strange power to awaken confidence, Mr. Stephens."

"Then you really trust me?"

The fine eyes darkened, misting instantly, and in a voice barely audible, she replied, "Implicitly."

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH WE LAY THE GHOST

THE coming of night found our situation less promising, — a thick veil of clouds obscuring all gleam of stars, the wind veering more to the westward and growing bitterly cold. Our day's run had brought us perilously close to the ice-pack, and as a consequence the yacht's head had to be pointed more to the east and speed reduced, because ghostly bergs were beginning to emerge from out the haze hanging over the water. The sea, although far from calm, was not unusually heavy, and our vessel rode the swell without perceptible strain, the decks dry fore and aft, scarcely a sputter of spray flying over the forecastle rail. The barometer was falling slowly, presaging the approach of storm; yet nothing openly threatened with the exception of these thickening cloud-masses scudding up from out the south-west, their wildness reflected in the darkening sea, and the continuous thunder of waves along the ice-front blocking our passage. Recognizing the need of exercising the utmost precaution amid an environment of such danger, I had De Nova station an additional lookout on the forecastle, and call one of the men to his own side on the bridge. I visited the engine and boiler-rooms, ordered half speed and prompt attention to signals, took

one last searching glance about the dimming horizon, and finally threw myself, without undressing, on my bunk for a brief rest below.

As I lay there, thinking of that wild scene without, I discovered sleep impossible. Was I doing right thus to hold on for further southing? My conscience was not altogether clear, for I realized that it would be luck rather than seamanship that would take us through and bring us safely out again. Already the season for fierce wintry storms in these seas had arrived, wild, blinding storms of sleet and wind, before which seamanship was almost valueless; moreover, it was the season when the prevailing drift was northward, gales sweeping from the Pole over those leagues of ice and snow to burst in fury across the wind-lashed waters. Only some mystery of Providence had thus far given us passage, had held the wind to another point of the compass, beating back the invading floes and yielding to us an open sea. But would such fortune last — a day, two days, more? We could race northward with the ice, but what about that vast field stretching to the northwest? If by some shift of wind it were to close in, the helpless *Sea Queen* would be crushed like an eggshell. And Lady Darlington had said she trusted me implicitly. Was I showing myself worthy by thus pushing the yacht deeper into danger? What did I care for the crew? I could control them in any waters, the bullies! Was there anything of reality in that ghostly visitant I had seen, — seen, too, by Anderson and Coleman? Was it, indeed, a warning? a herald of death awaiting us in the frozen South?

I sat up, my forehead beaded with perspiration. I was not personally afraid; our situation did not truly terrify me. I possessed all a sailor's confidence in the fortunes of the sea. I believed I could press the yacht into the very mouth of that icy hell, and bring her safely forth again. Yet all at once — God alone knows how or why — I recognized something else, something more important — *I loved Lady Darlington.* Perhaps this was true long before, yet it was only then that it came to me in its full revelation. She was the wife of another, trusting me implicitly as a sailor and gentleman, yet I loved her with all my heart and soul. Was I, in any way, worthy? Was I not, even then, betraying her confidence, both as a sailor and a gentleman? Was I not unnecessarily imperilling her life and honor by thus madly holding on?

By Heaven! for her sake, if for no other reason, I would play the man! Ay, and I comprehended exactly what such resolve would cost — realized fully what that mongrel crew would say and do the moment their ghostly terrors fled, and they knew I had given up search for the treasure. I should have to command by brute force, by threat and blow. There would be mutiny aboard for every league until we made port. I knew the nature of that sea-scum forward, — how they would whine and curse, how they would hate me for failing to hold them to their course in face of death! Well, let them hate; my love was worth by far the more, and the life and honor of Lady Darlington outweighed all else on board, — ay, and the treasure of the *Donna Isabel!* "Implicitly," — I saw her eyes again as she said it, and

sprang to the deck, fumbling in the darkness for the latch of my door.

The main cabin was dimly lighted and chill, the fire in the stove low. I paused to rattle it, and add a few lumps of coal from the scuttle standing near by. In spite of surrounding comforts what a grim, inhospitable place this was for any woman like her! Probably there was not a ship within a thousand miles of us; nothing but ice-bound ocean, gray, pitiless, sombre, swept by the wintry wind, lashed by snow and sleet, a wide, desolate expanse, typical only of death, destruction, and inexpressible cruelty. It made me shiver, as I brought to mind that scene of Antarctic loneliness visible from the deck above. The very snugness of the cabin served only to emphasize the gloom and peril without, the frightful polar mystery which surrounded us, which drives men mad amid its awful distances, its shrouded silence. The telltale compass in the deck-beam overhead told me that our course was still to south of southeast, and I buttoned my pea-jacket, winding the muffler about my throat, and drawing my cap low.

Suddenly, directly opposite where I stood, I saw it again — that same shapeless, white, gliding figure. An instant only I stood rooted to the spot, my blood like ice, my eyes full of horror. Then the swift reaction came, the reserve courage of a man ashamed of such weakness, and I leaped straight toward the misty object, grappling at it with my hands. I touched nothing but air, falling headlong with a violence jarring the entire cabin, and overthrowing a chair crashing to the deck. Dazed, confused, I staggered to my knees, staring about

into the dim shadows. A white-draped figure was at my very elbow, and I sprang to my feet, only to take a quick step backward, grasping at the table, as I recognized Lady Darlington.

"Good God! was that you?" I gasped, the horror still possessing me.

"This certainly is," she answered swiftly. "But what do you mean? What has occurred?"

"I hardly know," and I looked about me, and then into her face, breathing heavily. "I seem unable to separate the real from the unreal. I am half afraid I am losing my mind. Lady Darlington, it is not only the crew forward who are seeing ghosts on board. I laughed at my experience before, believing it a mere illusion that could never occur again. In that spirit I told you about seeing a white, misty figure in this cabin the night after Tuttle died. It vanished like a wreath of smoke, and daylight made me believe the vision was born of a tired brain. But I have seen it again now — yonder, as plainly as I can see you. It was no dream, no imagination; yet when I sought to grasp the thing, my fingers encountered nothing but air."

I saw her hands tremble, her white face turned whither I pointed; but she had not beheld what I had, and her mind remained clear.

"What was it you saw?"

"A shapeless white figure, misty, vanishing like a bubble."

"Yonder, you say? just where you saw it before?"

I had not thought of that, yet it was true — there, beside Tuttle's door. An instant she stood motionless,

her eyes searching the dim corners of the cabin, as though tracing some suspicion awakened within her mind. Suddenly she clasped my arm.

"We do not believe in ghosts, Mr. Stephens, you and I," her voice growing firmer with conviction. "Our education and training make such a conception impossible. There is a natural cause for this, a reason, an actual presence back of the shadow. There must be, and we must find it. It frightens me; I am trembling now from head to foot, yet I will not believe anything so horrible. Where did you stand when you saw this apparition?"

I stepped back to the spot beside the stove, realizing that she still clung tightly to me.

"Here, and I lifted my eyes like this."

She leaned eagerly forward, her breath on my cheek, her fingers clutching my arm.

"Why — why that is a mirror you are looking into! See! What is it reflected there? Turn up the light until I locate the spot. Oh, I see now — the open pantry door. Mr. Stephens, there is where your ghost stood — it was the shadow of a man reflected in that mirror."

Our eyes met, all my former terror fled, shame and anger dominating me.

"Dade?"

"It might be — certainly some one who sought in that way to terrorize officers and crew, and thus compel them to turn back. Whoever it was, he killed Mr. Tuttle, and now seeks to accomplish the same end with you. What are you going to do?"

"Trace him down. The last time the fellow went directly from here to the forecastle. There must be a passageway from stem to stern."

She caught me as I turned, her gray eyes wide with apprehension.

"You will take me with you?"

"That will be impossible, Lady Darlington. I know nothing regarding this passage amidships, but it must surely lead through the coal bunkers and the engine-room."

"But — but I can not let you go alone," utterly forgetting to conceal her agitation. "Truly, I could not bear to do it. Whoever this man may be he will become desperate when cornered. Your very life will be in danger."

"And you really care?" my hand clasping hers, my eyes eagerly searching the gray depths.

"Yes, I care," making no effort to free herself; "why should I not? Think what our condition would be if you were not on board. Yet that is not all; I care because I value your life, your friendship. You were afraid a moment ago of a vision, but now, when you are convinced it was merely the shadow of a man, all fear has vanished. With me it is different — it is the man I fear. Little as I can do, let me, at least, be near you."

"You are near me," said I, utterly forgetful of circumstances in the sudden rush of passion, "always near me, because my thoughts are with you, my sole purpose in life to serve you."

The gray eyes fell instantly; the clasping hand was withdrawn and pressed to her forehead.

"I — I will try to do as you wish," she faltered, "but are you armed?"

"Not now, but I will get a revolver from my stateroom. First, let me help you to your cabin."

She permitted my guidance without a word of protest, only glancing once up into my face as she put a question.

"You will return here? you will let me know at once what you discover? Promise me this."

"I promise; and more, I will pledge myself to be cautious, so do not worry."

I procured my revolver, turned the light low once more in the main cabin, and then stole silently into the narrow passageway leading forward. I had never explored this before, supposing it merely led to the ship's stores. All superstitious terror had by now left me, anger at being so easily tricked taking its place and urging me on. There was no light in the pantry, but the faint reflection from the cabin enabled me to distinguish the more prominent outlines. A form lay outstretched on a locker, and I bent over it silently. It was Dade, curled up on his side and sound asleep. There was no doubt about the reality of his slumber; the fellow was not shamming, and I drew back, leaving him undisturbed. The alley-way leading forward was extremely narrow, yet of a height sufficient to afford comparatively easy passage had it only been lighted. The darkness, however, compelled me to advance with caution, fearful lest some open hatch might precipitate me into the hold. I could feel the sides of closely matched boarding, and the heavy beams supporting the deck overhead. All about was gloomy and silent, all sounds from without

lost; within, only the creaking of timbers and the slush of bilge water accompanying the heave of the vessel underfoot. Suddenly a faint glow appeared ahead, and a moment later I slipped cautiously through a small bulkhead door, standing ajar, into a low, square room, containing six bunks arranged in tiers of two. A slush lamp swung from a blackened beam, and various articles of wearing apparel dangled from hooks. I peered into the bunks, discovering three occupied, the unconscious sleepers being Cooky, the smooth-faced Chilean, and the gunner, a Swede named Gustafson. None awoke under my scrutiny, although the Chilean was talking in his sleep and threshing his arms about as if in nightmare. I bent down, looking at him more closely, attracted by something oddly familiar in the upturned features. By all the gods, the fellow was Lieutenant Juan Sanchez, his long moustaches shaven, and looking ten years younger! It was so odd a thing, this sudden renewal of a controversy originating thousands of leagues away, that I nearly laughed outright, forgetting for the instant the serious purpose bringing me there.

Yet this surprising discovery of Sanchez aboard seemed of comparatively little importance, and was as quickly dismissed. The narrow bulkhead door leading forward was tightly closed, and in that dim light I had to hunt for it, so perfectly was it fitted into place. When discovered, however, it proved to be unfastened, and I stepped forth into an emptied coal-bunker, whence I could look straight forward along the glowing boilers into the engine-room. I advanced carefully along the slight open space until I came upon the squad of

firemen and big Bill Anderson. The latter shaded his eyes, staring at me as though he mistook me for another ghost, but I took the initiative.

"I have been investigating the arrangement of things below, Anderson," I said, in explanation; "rather odd way in which the yacht is cut up. Did you know there was a passage leading all the way aft?"

The boatswain shook his head, too surly naturally to answer.

"Well, possibly you know whether or not a similar passage leads forward into the forecastle?"

"There 's a bulkhead door over there," he returned, indicating by a gesture a spot concealed by the donkey pump, "but I don't know where it goes, only it 's dark as hell."

"It comes out under the forecastle, sir," broke in a coal-heaver named Davis. "Leastwise there 's a trap in the deck there, with a ladder leadin' down."

"I 'll finish the trip through, then, for I like to know what is under my feet when I command a vessel. Where is the engineer, Anderson?"

He waved his big hairy hand in the direction of the boilers.

"Went to his bunk to lie down for an hour; he was about all in."

"Are you capable of standing watch alone in an engine-room?"

The fellow grinned, his bulldog jaw protruding.

"Well, I 've had to do it on this trip whether I 'm capable or not. That fellow can't stand it in here night an' day without no rest. I know how to start an' stop

her, an' watch the water-gauge. If anything else goes wrong he's easy enough called."

So it was McKnight who was playing the antics of a ghost on board; McKnight who had discovered that unusual passageway through the bulkheads; McKnight who had conceived the idea that in this manner he could frighten us into turning back. Well, truly, I did not altogether blame the man, and, now that my own fear of the supernatural was allayed, did not feel any desire to punish him severely. Still, his masquerade must stop before he thoroughly demoralized the crew, frightening them beyond all my power of control. No doubt he was forward now, perhaps rising up as a spirit through the forecastle hatch, driving the watch below into hysterics.

I discovered the door concealed behind the donkey engine, left it slightly ajar behind me, and stepped forward into the black passage. I could see nothing ahead, yet experienced no difficulty in feeling my way along, moving with utmost silence, hopeful of hearing him before he could discover me. I had thus groped along to the very foot of the ladder, feeling nothing but bare walls, and hearing no sound except the slush of bilge water, when suddenly an inarticulate cry sounded almost directly above; something, a hatch cover possibly, seemed to settle into place, and the ladder shook under my hand. I drew back a step, permitting the fellow to come down until he reached the floor. My eyes, accustomed to the gloom, enabled me to dimly perceive his shape. It was no more than a formless smudge he made, but I struck out straight for what seemed to be the head, and landed with a force that

dropped him like a log. In an instant I was on top, clasping the canvas sheet he wore tightly about his arms, and throttling him against the deck. He fought like a wild bull for a moment, thoroughly frightened and whimpering, dazed by the suddenness of attack, yet following the animal instinct of a struggle for life. I was compelled to pound his head on the planks, my knee crushing in his chest, before his muscles relaxed and he permitted me breath for speech.

"Damn you, McKnight, lie still!" I panted. "I 've got you, and you might just as well take your medicine, my man. Yes, that 's a gun you feel, and I know how to use it. So you 're the ghost of the *Sea Queen*, are you? Nice healthy looking ghost, and a pretty trick to play on your shipmates. I guess you know what this means if I turn you over to those fellows, don't you?"

He groaned, and I ventured to release my grip on his throat, flinging back the canvas from his head.

"Sit up. Well, I 'll tell you, McKnight — you would probably go overboard to feed the fishes. Do you recognize me?"

"Yes, sir," managing to find his voice for the first time. "You 're Mr. Stephens."

"Right you are, and you can bless your lucky stars that I am the one who caught you. What started you at this trick?"

"It was the Chilean, sir, Sanchez; he said we could scare the whole outfit."

"Did he do any of the ghost playing?"

"No, sir; he did n't have the nerve, but — but he rigged me up, and found out about these passageways."

What was I to do with the man? In truth there was little I dared to do under the circumstances.

"Now see here, McKnight," I said soberly, "you quit this thing for good and all; if there is any more ghost walking done on the *Sea Queen* I 'll turn you and Sanchez over to the men. There are three reasons why I don't do so now — first, you 're white, and probably a decent enough fellow under ordinary conditions; second, I feel a certain sympathy with you, for I dislike this voyage about as badly as you do; and third, I need your service in the engine-room. But don't make the mistake of supposing that any or all of these reasons will ever save you the second time. Besides, there 's no use resorting again to that sort of trick, for we 're about at the end of our cruise."

"You mean we 're going to turn north?"

"Yes. Now if I let you go will you behave yourself?"

He promised with an eager earnestness that went far toward convincing me I had not only conquered the man, but won his friendship as well.

"Then wait here, McKnight, until I can pass back alone through the engine-room. In ten minutes you slip through, and let this end it. Shake hands, my man."

He gave me a grip I felt, and so I left him, a mere shadow in the black passage.

Lady Darlington stood within the door of her cabin waiting for me, her face brightening as I emerged through the pantry door.

"I have been so anxious, and you have been gone so long! I have imagined everything; but you are not injured? not harmed in any way?"

"Perfectly whole, and besides, have solved the mystery, and ended the reign of evil spirits on board."

"Who was it?"

"McKnight; I caught him in the very act, but shall keep it from the crew. There will be no repetition of this affair, I am sure, for now we are homeward bound."

How quickly her gray eyes lighted up, her hands instantly clasping mine.

"Homeward bound, Mr. Stephens! Have we already attained the spot sought in this sea? Was there nothing discovered there as a reward for all this long voyage?"

"No, we are not yet there, but I have determined upon turning back. I can not take you any farther into danger."

She stood, gripping my hands tightly, looking directly into my face, the sudden light of happiness fading from her eyes.

"For my sake?" she questioned. "You are turning back for my sake? But — but you promised the men."

"You stand for more to me than any such promise," I insisted. "I thought it all out to-night, and had started on deck to change our course when I encountered the shadow here in the cabin."

"But why? why? Is the peril so terribly desperate? How much further south must we go?"

"With fair luck, the wind holding as it is, we might attain the position to-morrow. 'T is not a long run; but, Lady Darlington, I am afraid to risk it. The slightest slant of wind will bring the ice crashing down upon us. We are under Damocles' sword, suspended by a hair. This is the beginning of winter in these

latitudes — of fierce gales from the south sweeping across leagues of frozen waters. We have been wonderfully fortunate thus far, yet a single day, ay, a single hour, might seal our fate, hemming us in beyond any possibility of escape. There 's ice everywhere except to the northward; even now the barometer is falling. I might take the chance if we were all mere adventurers on board, but I dare not trifle any longer with your life."

She stood swaying slightly, her hands now grasping the top of the piano, her lips white and motionless. I could plainly distinguish her rapid breathing. Suddenly her expression of doubt changed.

"I — I am not that kind of a coward, Mr. Stephens. You — you owe it to those men to push on, now we are so near their goal. You have pledged them your word, and — and I want you to keep it."

The companion-door slid back, and a man came heavily down the steps. As he caught sight of us he pulled off his cap awkwardly.

"Mr. De Nova sent me to call you, sir," he said. "It 's four bells."

CHAPTER XXII

IN WHICH WE ATTAIN 66° 17′ SOUTH

WHEN morning arrived the *Sea Queen* was plunging through an angry sea, in the midst of a raging snow-storm which effectually concealed all our immediate surroundings. With vivid remembrance of those vast ice-fields lying off our starboard quarter, and the certainty that numerous bergs were drifting not far ahead, we were compelled to slow down our engines, feeling a way cautiously through the white fog. Yet the prevailing wind continued to blow from the northwest, holding fairly steady, thus insuring practically clear water, and inviting us to press on. The men of my watch appeared restless, gathering in little groups out of the bite of the storm, vehemently discussing among themselves some matter of controversy. Beyond doubt the disturbing subject was the reappearance of the ghost, but none among them ventured to approach me regarding the matter, and I was careful to keep them busily employed about the deck and separated as far as possible.

This was not difficult, as there was plenty of work to do. The ice-cakes buffeting our bows, and scraping along the sides, were a constant menace, requiring men to fend them off so as to keep rudder and screw uninjured;

the mainsail had broken loose from its gaskets, and, frozen stiff as the heavy canvas was, proved difficult to secure; while the ice on our forward deck had accumulated to such a thickness as to be weighting us down by the head, and had to be chopped loose and flung overboard in great blocks.

I called Sanchez away from the cook's galley, much to the disgust of that latter worthy, and sent him below to relieve McKnight, confident that the Chilean would have, from his naval training, some considerable knowledge of the engine-room. Though the fellow had a hunted look and started fearsomely when I spoke to him, he gave no sign of having recognized me, and may indeed have been too drunk the night of his adventure at the hotel to recall my features. In any event he was apparently glad enough in escaping the tyranny of the cook to overlook everything else. The storm thickened rather than diminished as the day advanced, and we had one or two close calls from the huge, silent bergs bearing down upon us out of the smother, their only warning of approach the dash of waves against their icy fronts. They were dismal, frightful shades, creeping forth from the snow curtains, hanging high above our mastheads, threatening to drop tons of ice on our decks and send us crashing down. The very heart seemed to cease beating as the laboring yacht, fighting for life, would slowly pay off, and leave some vast mountain to drift growling astern.

I kept to the deck nearly all the forenoon, although De Nova served his watch on the bridge. During a part of the time Lady Darlington was with me, under the

protection of the poop-deck, wrapped up until she was almost shapeless, yet with eyes glowing brightly and filled with interest, as she gazed out through the snow flurry. We hung over the rail together, watching the narrow ribbon of gray water as it went swirling past our counter, tossing the drift-ice almost within reach of the hand, a sullen, grim, restless mass, each chasing wave an epitome of Antarctic solitude. The very look of it served to hold us speechless, with a dread resting upon the heart which was beyond any expression of words. I could watch her face, comprehending something of the rare courage with which she silently permitted the struggling *Sea Queen* to keep her bow still sternly pointed southward.

It was not far from noon when the heavy snow-clouds broke and went scurrying away like a flock of birds, leaving the wide sweep of waters clear to our view, with a yellow sun hanging cold in the pale blue of the sky. The wind rose with the change, becoming bitter from frost, and flattening down the crest of the waves until the whole expanse of sea was a smother of foam, looking as mad as the rapids of Niagara. I hardly knew where we were, not feeling at all certain about the extent of our drift during the past twenty-four hours, and so hastily brought my instruments on deck and shot the sun, stepping into the chart-house to figure out our position. The result sent a sudden thrill of exultation through me.

"We have attained the spot!" I exclaimed, as I glanced up, and saw her gazing in at me through the open door. "Now we will ascertain the truth of Tuttle's vision."

"The spot? Do you mean this is the point of sea we have been seeking?"

"Ay! and now, thank God! we can head the other way."

I sprang eagerly past her, clinging to a life-line so as to keep my feet on the deck, too thoroughly excited by my discovery to remain any longer in idleness.

"Johnson, run below, and call Mr. De Nova. Have him turn out at once."

I watched the fellow slide to the companion, and made my own way to the bridge, sweeping my glasses anxiously about the clearing horizon. Within a minute De Nova had joined me, his eyes still heavy from sleep.

"Mr. De Nova," I said rapidly, my gloved hand sweeping a semicircle in our front, "I have just taken an observation, and this is latitude 66° 17′ South, and longitude 110° 30′ West. Send your sharpest-eyed look-out to the foretopsail yard with these glasses. Then call all hands."

He went down the bridge stairs as though shot from a gun, and a moment later a young seaman named Symes was swiftly footing the ratlines, their coating of ice breaking under his tread and rattling on the deck below. The men swarmed out from the forecastle and up the main-hatch, ranging themselves about the foot of the foremast, watching me eagerly, and occasionally peering up at Symes, now well above the cross-trees. Lady Darlington still clung to the door of the chart-house, her skirts flapping in the wind, while back under the hood of the companion I caught a dim glimpse of Celeste.

"Lads," I cried, bending over the rail of the bridge,

and staring down into their upturned faces, "I 've just figured out our position, and this is the spot we 've been hunting after in these seas. I 've sent Symes aloft to look out for Tuttle's island. If there 's any land in sight, well and good; we 'll have a try for looting the *Donna Isabel* of those Spanish *pesos*. But if not, then we 'll call it a wild-goose chase, and the *Sea Queen* points her nose north."

There was a faint, half-hearted attempt at a cheer, which ended in a muttering of oaths and a shuffling of feet on the icy planks. The glances of the fellows turned upward toward Symes, now securely posted on the foretopsail yard, the glasses to his eyes. One or two among them, including Anderson, clambered to the top of the forecastle where they could see ahead.

"How the hell," the latter yelled suddenly from that point of vantage, "do we know this is the place, and that you ain't foolin' us just to get back?"

The crowd turned their eyes on me, and I heard a growl of approval.

"Principally because I say so, Anderson. The chart, with our course pricked on it day by day, is yonder in the chart-house. And my figures are there also for this day's reckoning."

"But we don't any of us know anything about that!"

"True enough, but there happens to be one on board who can figure it out for you if you doubt my word. Lady Darlington can do it."

The rising medley of growling voices ceased almost instantly, and if I had felt any question as to what her ladyship would do it was immediately silenced. She

slipped to the rail of the stairs, her hood thrown back, her hair blowing in the wind.

"I — I believe thoroughly in Mr. Stephens," she said, clearly, "but it is true that I know something of navigation, and if you really doubt his statement I will figure it out for you."

"Now you hear that, lads," my voice ringing out stern over the hubbub. "You 'll believe this lady if her results are the same as mine. Now stop your growling."

I hollowed my hands for a hail aloft.

"What do you pick up, Symes?"

His words came back in a thread of sound as he looked down upon us from his bobbing perch.

"Not very much, sir, except water. There 's a hell of a big field o' ice out yonder," pointing with one hand, the other gripping the spar, "but it 's mostly flat, an' all glistenin' with snow. There 's maybe a dozen bergs ahead an' off the port quarter, mostly medium size, but with the devil of a big fellow a point or so to the north."

"Any land?"

"Not a sign, sir, unless that 's it I take for a big berg. The shadows look dark enough for rock."

"Ease her off two points, wheelsman."

"Two points it is, sir."

We stood there, silent and motionless, waiting anxiously, the men ranged along the rail, with their eyes all turned forward. I rang for full speed, and the *Sea Queen* fairly leaped ahead through the icy smother, flinging clouds of white spray over the heedless figures. Within ten minutes we began to perceive the huge mass we were approaching from the deck, and never before had my eyes

looked upon so gigantic and majestic a mountain of ice. It was one immense cliff towering into the upper air, being fully three hundred feet high, and not less than twelve hundred feet in length, with vast glittering pinnacles rising still farther into the sky, its entire front a sheer precipice, gleaming in cold blue, with hardly a darker shadow anywhere to yield relief to the eye. It was the grimest looking object ever seen by a Northern eye, with that fierce sea pounding along its base. I thought of the millions of tons of ice down below which held that towering mass upright, of those leagues of drifting before final disintegration, of the awful, stupendous power of it, and my head whirled dizzily as we steadily drew nearer, each moment causing that gigantic monster of the deep to appear more appalling. We ran so close we could hear the boom of the waves, as though they smote against solid rock, the vast cliff towering above us so menacingly I saw the men draw shudderingly back from the rail with their faces filled with terror. It was enormous, overpowering, yet nothing but ice — a huge, frozen mountain, lorn and deserted. We rounded its eastern edge so closely one could have tossed a biscuit from the foreyard against its smooth front, the swell of its motion tossing the daring yacht like an eggshell. Symes clung to his perch aloft with the grip of a monkey, swinging back and forth to the wild swaying of the spar. Suddenly he yelled down:

"There 's wind comin' from the sou'west, sir."

"Heavy?"

"Looks to be a stiff breeze, an' it 's bringin' more snow."

"Lay down from aloft."

I sprang over to consult the binnacle-card, and then cast one swift, comprehending glance at the thickening gloom in the southwest. Beyond doubt the change had come.

"Give her two more points north, wheelsman; keep her head nor'east by nor'—steady so. Mr. De Nova, send another man up here to the wheel. All hands now; stow everything; tail on to those gaskets lively, my lads; we're in for a blow, and a run for our lives."

To my amazement scarcely a man among them stirred, the eyes of the majority turning toward Anderson. Evidently there was an understanding between them; they intended to revolt and had chosen him their leader. He stood just in front of the forecastle, a lumping big figure in his heavy clothes, his coarse face and ugly jaw showing beneath a fur cap.

"What yer turnin' north for in such a hurry, Mr. Stephens?" he growled hoarsely. "It's not by vote o' the crew, an' we're the ones that's got the say of it on this voyage. We're for keepin' along this line o' latitude for a day or so anyhow. Tuttle might 'a' got his figgers tangled an' missed a few leagues. Anyhow, we want the lady to give us her reckoning first."

I felt the hot blood leap to my face, and my teeth clenched as I leaned over the rail gazing down at him.

"Lads," I said, striving to master myself. "I've put you exactly where I promised I would; I've shown you all that was here. You can see for yourselves what will happen if we hold on any longer. The wind has swept around; it is going to bring that whole pack of

ice down on us. We 've got to run for it, or be crushed. Now what I want to know is, are you with me, or with Bill Anderson?"

They held off muttering, yet casting uneasy glances over the rail. Anderson stamped angrily on the deck.

"Oh, to hell with yer fine words," he said grimly. "What if the wind has changed a bit? Can't we beat off the floe under steam the same as we did before? We 're sailor-men, and not afraid of a rough sea. For one, I 'm damned if I leave that gold to rot here without huntin' for it."

Words were clearly useless, and I ripped back my heavy coat, dragging off my gloves, all patience exhausted.

"Come on, De Nova," I exclaimed, "you 've got sense enough to realize what this means."

I was over the rail with a leap, fronting them on the deck. Almost to my surprise the creole landed beside me, and without a word we struck out at the heads in our front. It was a fierce mix-up for a minute, yet only a man or two stood with Anderson, the suddenness of our assault taking all the fight out of most of them. I struck Big Bill twice squarely in the face, driving him back against the steps leading to the forecastle deck; over these he fell sprawling, his head thumping the plank. The next instant I had De Nova's antagonists in the rear, and together we laid them out against the rail, and none too gently. The mate's smile had become ugly, and he would have leaped into the rest of the bunch, but I caught his arm.

"They 've had enough," I said, breathing hard. "Go

back on the bridge, De Nova. Now, you lads, get busy. If one of you soldiers, or talks back to me again, he'll go to his bunk for the rest of this voyage. Get up, Anderson, and stop that growling! You fellows may as well learn first as last that I am commanding the *Sea Queen*, and that we are homeward bound."

Within the space of five minutes I had the whole gang at it, a profane, shuffling crew enough, yet carrying out my orders after a fashion, and sufficiently cowed to be obedient. And I kept them busy about the icy deck for an hour or more, while the yacht, lying well over under freshening gusts from the southwest, raced ahead, ploughing the floating ice from out her track, the ever thickening snow chasing down upon us, the frozen rigging overhead whistling in the wind and showering the decks with ice fragments. The swell of the sea increased, flinging us on the crests, and compelling the wheelsman to ease her off another point or so. At last I despatched the starboard watch below, and, leaving De Nova in charge of the bridge, started back to the companion. To my surprise Lady Darlington, muffled to the eyes, still stood, half protected, in the open door of the chart-house.

"What in the world are you doing here in all this snow and blow?" I questioned.

"Waiting for you," she explained, her eyes glowing. "I could not go to the cabin until I knew you had really won. Is it true that we are homeward bound?"

"Yes," I answered, not altogether happy over her evident pleasure. "The *Sea Queen* has attained her farthest southing. Are you glad?"

"Glad!" Her gloved hands sought mine. "In all my life I was never happier."

These impulsive words, natural as they were, nevertheless hurt me, and perhaps my face exhibited it. Her eyes fell.

"You can not know how much I have suffered on this voyage," she said regretfully. "Only a woman could. My heart cries out for relief, but it is not because I wish to lose any friendship formed on board."

"Yet that is what being homeward bound must inevitably mean."

Her long lashes were uplifted, disclosing the depths of those gray eyes.

"Not with me, Mr. Stephens; I am not a woman to forget."

CHAPTER XXIII

IN WHICH THE YACHT MEETS DISASTER

I HAVE been endeavoring to recall in sequence the occurrences of the three days and nights following our turning northward, but it is all chaos, vague, confused, — an expanse of sleepless hours, raging seas, snow, sleet, and ice, in the midst of which we battled for life in as desperately terrific a fight as man ever waged against nature. I can see and feel it all clearly enough, yet the incidents are so commingled that the separate days and nights appear one continuous event, without beginning or end. I recall the yacht's deck swept clear of everything movable, — hatches battened down; two of the boats crushed in at their davits, the iron supports bent shapeless; the port bulwarks broken amidships; the chart-house smashed into kindling and half of it swept overboard; the bridge splintered and bent; the wheel-house and funnel encrusted with ice; and great seas pouring in cataracts over the forecastle, sweeping aft as far as the companion. I hear the ceaseless howl of the wind, the growl of grinding ice, the smiting of tons of water, the threshing of loosened canvas, the rattle of blocks aloft, the thousand noises emitted by the struggling fabric under foot. I see the swirl of snow; the crested seas, boiling in madness; the gleam of pursuing

ice-fields; the towering pinnacles of giant bergs overhanging our mast-heads; the flying clouds, and the settling down about us of the ghostly frost fog. I feel the wild plunge down into the hollow; the sickening, staggering effort to climb up; the dizzy balancing upon the crest, and that awful drop again into the hell below! It seemed endless, eternal, merciless, ever whirled about in that inferno of battling waters, the great walls rising around us, the ice-jaws crunching our very sides, as we stared, weary-eyed, into the face of death.

No man on board will ever know how we made it; how we ever found passage through those wind-lashed channels; how we ever kept upright under the pounding of that sea; how the *Sea Queen* ever shook her trembling decks free from the tons of ice and water, and rose staggering to the crest. Not once in all that time did I obtain glimpse of either sun or star; nothing greeted us above, below, but gray sea, gray sky, gray fog, the glitter of ice, and the dazzle of snow. It was a maddening spectacle, the long hours of the polar night seeming an eternity. All I actually realized was that we were being driven northeast, scourged by a tempest which bore with it the vast ice-floes of the Antarctic, their glistening fronts ever threatening destruction. Once our engines broke, and for two hours we rolled helplessly, while McKnight and the Chilean tinkered at the damaged machinery, and the great waves buried us, and smashed the chart-house into fragments. Once the rudder-chains became fouled with ice, and we swung into the trough of the sea hurled over until our lower yards trailed in the water and half the yacht shivered

beneath the smother, we hanging on for our lives, drenched and buffeted by the waves. The jib-boom snapped like a pipestem, and a huge, ugly hole was ripped out of the forward bulwarks. Up to the neck in icy water we chopped away the raffle, and flung it overboard. Gustafson, shrieking wildly for help, went with the litter, while his mates bore Symes below groaning from a broken leg.

Merciful heavens, how that ice came down, pursuing us like the very Fiend! Once it pressed so closely against our quarter that the sea, rebounding from off its front, boarded us, sweeping aft in a vast wall. It caught Dade opening the companion-door, hurled him smothering backward, and flooded the cabin a foot deep in icy water. Yet we held to it, our eyes aching, our limbs frozen, our oilskins stiff with ice, the exposed flesh of our faces one festering frostbite, bruised by the shocks, half dead from fatigue, dizzy from the battle. But it was no seamanship which saved us; it was a merciful Providence, for at times the smother was so thick we ran into it blindly, not daring to broach to with all that ice after us, driven by the wind, and not knowing what was ten yards ahead, or ten yards behind. Time, distance, direction, — all were lost; hope hung by the merest thread, yet in some way we fought the gray water, and in some way the *Sea Queen* plunged on and we lived, clinging to her drenched deck, gripping her jumping wheel, hauling at her straining ropes, and fighting the demon Despair, as men must when the Antarctic smites them.

During all that time I scarcely left the deck, although

De Nova served his watch on the bridge in the flying spray. Dade fed me as best he could, and what brief snatches of sleep I caught were on the divan in the cabin, my icy clothes drying on my body. I saw nothing of the women; there was no time, no opportunity. I doubt if either could have kept upright amid the awful pitching of the yacht, for I was obliged myself to creep from one hand-grasp to another. I shall never forget my glimpse of De Nova fighting his way aft from the bridge, and finally bringing up in a huddle against the front of the cabin. So I saw nothing of the ladies, but Dade succeeded in taking them food, — cold provender, for the galley was wave-lashed, the cook driven below, — although how the lad ever managed it is a mystery, and he reported that Celeste clung to her bunk, sick and frightened, but that Lady Darlington was about and dressed whenever he went in.

Some time during the third day the wind had blown itself out, or else we had been driven beyond the sweep of it. Anyhow, it died down into faint puffs, but the sea remained heavy, the fog thickening as the gale ceased. It was a heavy white fog which seemed to come and go in waves of vapor, at times as dense as if a thick cloud had settled down over the waters, dry and frosty, with a peculiar sparkle to its particles like diamond dust. You appeared fairly to push the stuff aside as you walked, and actually felt it press against you as though it was solid matter. This curtain, coupled with the sparse light there was, left the decks so dark that we attempted little clearing up, merely pointing the yacht's nose more directly northward, and pushed forward at half-speed, trusting

the Almighty to furnish us with clear water. Indeed, there was nothing else to do with that ice-pack back of us, and the fierce seas pounding our poop. Besides, I had come to the end of my endurance, and when De Nova came limping forward, hanging to the life-line, to take his watch, I crept below more dead than alive, and clawed my way across the cabin. Lady Darlington stood braced in her doorway, yet for the life of me I could not speak, although I tried — my head nodded on my shoulders, and I fell forward across my bunk, asleep before I even struck the mattress. Dade said she made him pull off my boots and unloosen my muffler, standing over him until it was done.

It was not sleep — it was more like death, for I never stirred, or knew anything. I lay exactly as I fell, utterly insensible to either noise or motion. It was Dade's vigorous shaking that finally aroused me, nor did he desist until he had me sitting up in the bunk, my eyes wide open. There was a light burning in the main cabin, but my own state-room was dark; the yacht seemed to be riding the seas more easily.

"What time is it, Dade?"

"Two o'clock, sir."

"Morning?"

"No, sir, afternoon; but the fog is that thick outside you can't see your own nose."

"Then I've been asleep for six hours. Why didn't you call me earlier?"

"Mr. De Nova told me to let you lie, sir; I guess the lady asked him to do it."

I had pulled on my boots, and was standing up,

gazing out through the door into the cabin, where Dade still remained, watching to see that I did not go back to sleep again. Suddenly there came a tremendous shock which sent me sprawling forward, and flung Dade headlong against the wall. As I struck the deck a thunderous crash and roar sounded forward; the stern of the vessel seemed to spring upward into the air, sliding us both down against the front of the cabin. Instantly there followed two muffled reports, accompanied by a further uptilting of the stern. Everything loose came tumbling down upon us, and, as I pulled myself to my knees, I found the deck slanting upward like the steep side of a hill.

"Oh, Lord, sir, what 's been done?"

"We 've hit something hard; ice, likely. Jump now, and help me get out the women."

The awful, sickening poise of the stricken boat, swinging stern-up to the motion of the waves, was enough to shatter the courage of any man, and I could read speechless terror in Dade's face. Yet the lad stayed with me, and together we clambered up the incline of the deck, gripping at the table to help us. The hanging lamp rested flat against the beam, but continued to burn. The door of the after-cabin was either locked or had become stuck; I did not wait to learn which, but burst it open with a swift, heavy kick. The light streamed in upon a scene of chaos, — overturned furniture and broken glass. Celeste lay in one corner screaming hysterically; Lady Darlington was upon her knees, holding herself partially erect by clasping the brass rail of the bed.

"Quick!" I cried, before either could speak. "Gather up all the warm clothing you can reach. We must get on deck. Here, let me help you!"

We were scarcely a minute at the task; and the four of us, laden with apparel, slid and scrambled down the slope of cabin floor to the companion-steps. Here I caught Lady Darlington more closely to me, helping her climb the inverted stairs. Her face was pale, her eyes fearless.

"What is it? What has happened?"

"I hardly know myself; only that we have hit something and are badly damaged."

It was like night on deck, the enveloping fog so dense that a human form was indistinguishable five feet away. Fortunately but little wind stirred, and the sea had gone down. We clung to the rail to keep from sliding forward, and endeavored to obtain some conception as to what had occurred. I could distinguish De Nova's voice as he sang out a sharp order. I hollowed my hands, and hailed. A dim smudge leaned over the rail above, and peered down.

"Was zat you, monsieur?"

"Ay, with the women. What is it, De Nova, a total smash?"

"By gar, *oui!* Ze whole bow cave in; ze deck crush' to ze main-hatch; ze after-bulkhead was ze only sing w'at hold us up. *Sacre*, it not hold long."

I grasped the entire situation instantly, realizing the desperate need of haste, of cool, intelligent command.

"Send a man down here to help Dade tote up provisions. Jump lively now; get biscuits and canned

goods, my lads, and whatever blankets you can find. Hustle for your lives! Now, De Nova, reach over, and help the women up — easy; that's right."

I held tightly to my lady, clinging to the rail, as I crept across. The black, shapeless figures of several men, whose faces I could not distinguish in the gloom, were clambering about the long-boat.

"Everything fitted?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

"What have you got?"

"Oars, mast, canvas, and fresh water."

I reached forward to assure myself that the rudder had been properly shipped, and the plugs securely driven in.

"All right; here come the provisions. Dump them in anywhere, lads. Yes, go back for another load, but for God's sake hurry! De Nova, help me stow the women; gently, but quickly now. Here, two of you tail on to the falls; lower away carefully or you'll swamp her the way she hangs; go slow with that for'ard tackle. Stand by, all of you. Here is the rest of the provender. Now tumble in, lads, and let fall. Ease her off, ease her off, you fools!"

The black smudge dropped downward, and leaning far over the slanting rail I could see it strike the water and ride free. The sodden, wrecked hull beneath me rose and fell with a heavy, sickening motion which brought the heart up into my throat.

"Are those all the living men left, Mr. De Nova?" I called down, for the first time realizing how few they were.

"Zey was all I know."

Another voice spoke, gruff from excitement.

"The fellows for'ard had no chance, sir; all alive are here."

I swung over the side, and shot down the line into the boat.

"Cast off, then. Oars, men! the yacht is going under."

With a single sweep of the hastily plied blades we were beyond sight of the plunging hull, yet we had not taken half a dozen strokes before we were tossed roughly by a sudden convulsion of the sea.

"My God, she's gone!" shouted a voice forward.

All I could distinguish within the boat were the two women next me at the stern, — Celeste, with her face buried in her arms, and my lady staring into the icy fog.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN WHICH LOVE SPEAKS

NO one uttered a sound after that first wild cry. We sat there stunned into silence by the horror of the situation, every eye staring blindly into the mist, the long-boat tossing like a chip on the swell caused by the engulfing of the yacht. The crippled *Sea Queen* had evidently gone down like a shot. Twice I endeavored to speak, but something choked me, and my voice failed. I reached down into my pocket, held close to my eyes the small compass I always carried, and swung the boat's head northward. Even this slight effort at action gave me back some measure of self-control.

"You had better step the mast, Mr. De Nova, and get out what canvas you can spread. There is not much wind, but we 'll make the best of what little there is."

They went at the task as though glad to have work given them, but I could see nothing but the dim outlines of their forms. The forward part of the boat was indistinguishable.

"Spread the jib also; it will make easier riding."

"Ay, ay, sir."

I bent down toward Lady Darlington; she glanced around and directly into my eyes.

"Are you warm enough?"

"Oh, yes; but — but I hardly know how I am. This has come so suddenly. I — I am not frightened, but dazed, horrified. Were all the others on board drowned?"

"They must have been. I will question the men in a moment. Only I beg of you do not permit your courage to give way."

She rested her hand upon my knee.

"You need not fear for me," she said firmly. "I will not fail you."

The mainsail bellied out, catching whatever breeze there was, the boom swinging free and the long-boat leaning well over, as it leaped forward into the fog. The swift motion brought new heart to all of us.

"Pass back the provisions, lads, and we'll stow them away here in the stern-lockers."

This task required only a few moments, and when it was completed I was able to discern the mate, seated next to Celeste.

"Now tell me just what occurred, Mr. De Nova," I said. "What was it we bumped into, — an iceberg?"

"Zat was it, monsieur. You saw how ze fog lay. By gar, I not see ze fo'c'stle from ze bridge for more as four hour. We run at half-speed w'en you went below. *Sacre*, w'at else was dare? I know you much tired, an' so I stand ze vatch for six hour. By gar, my eyes burn tryin' to see somesing. Zen I send down for you to be call. Pretty soon I leave Larsen on ze bridge, an' start aft to see w'y you not come more quick. I get most to ze companion, when bang! we hit ze iceberg! Zat all I know for ze nex' minute, only zare be hell for'ard, an' ze ship up on end."

"Is that all you can tell? Is there any one else here able to explain?"

"Well, sir," said a deep, rumbling voice, forward, "I was just aft o' the main-hatch when the rumpus happened, a-hangin' on to a life-line. I could n't see much, but I figure it out like this. We hit a big berg bows on; a lot o' ice caved off on us, an' smashed in the for'ard deck like it was paper, crushin' down everything as fur aft as the engine-room. Both boilers blew up, an' then nothin' held the stern in the air but the after bulkhead. When that finally gave way the ol' hooker just nat'rally dropped to Davy Jones. There was n't a man ahead o' the main-hatch that had a chance even to run for it."

I caught my breath, feeling a shiver shake me.

"I am unable to make out who are on board," I said at last. "Name yourselves, beginning at the bow."

"Jem Cole, sir." It was the voice of the negro.

"Next. Speak up, men!"

"Johnson."

"Kelly."

"McKnight."

"Dade."

"Sanchez."

There was a pause, the last voice sounding just abaft the mast-butt.

"Is that all?"

"That 's all, sir."

"With De Nova, myself, and the two women it makes the count ten. Well, we sha' n't be crowded for

room. This is going to be a hard cruise, lads, but we 'll make a stiff fight for it. We 're sailors, with a stanch boat under us, and a chance to win out."

There was a faint cheer, rumbling, as if it had caught in their throats, and the negro asked:

"How much of a run is it, boss?"

"I am unable to tell you, Cole," I answered, endeavoring to make my voice sound hopeful, "because I have n't had any observation for three days. There is no use lying to you fellows. There is a mighty long stretch between us and any land worth trying after. We are out of the track of ships, and our only hope is to keep the long-boat right side up, and get out of her all the speed possible. It is going to be short rations and long watches, but if we don't freeze or get stove in by ice we 've got a fighting chance to pull through. Anyhow, it 's up to all of us to play the man. Two of you stand by to watch the running gear; the others had better lie down and get some sleep while the wind is light. Turn in with them, De Nova; you will have to relieve me at the tiller later."

They were a considerable time getting settled, talking among themselves, and no doubt feeling strange in their new surroundings. But sailors soon become accustomed to all kinds of vicissitudes, and the low rumble of voices finally died away into silence, broken only by the splash of water alongside and the dismal creaking of the boom. The fog seemed to be thinning somewhat, and I could perceive De Nova lying back with his head pillowed against the mast. Celeste had flung a blanket about his shoulders, and still held it in place, although her own

head was beginning to nod sleepily. Beyond question both women had been kept awake much of the night previous, and the gentle swing of the long-boat had a tendency to lull us all to sleep. Yet her ladyship sat upright, her shoulder touching my knee, her eyes on the sullen strip of water gliding away into the fog. I spoke to her, and we conversed softly for a while upon the stirring events of the past few days, and upon our chances of final rescue. But she seemed heavy-hearted, and we soon relapsed into silence.

The breeze perceptibly freshened, but not sufficiently to require any reefing of canvas, and the fog began drifting away like a great white cloud, leaving revealed the vista of cold gray sea stretching about us. Lord, but it did look barren and desolate, that ceaselessly heaving expanse of water, amid which we were but the merest speck, scarcely more important than those floating cakes of ice, tossed by the waves through which we sought passage. I could see the entire interior of the boat now, and observe its occupants, — the big negro, curled up like a dog in the bow; Kelly, a stockily built, red-headed Irish boy, sat on the forward thwart, staring moodily ahead; Johnson lay at full length in the bottom, his arms crossed over his face; McKnight and Dade half supported each other as they dozed; Sanchez, pale of face and looking more hunted than ever, lolled back against the gunwale, beating his hands to warm them, and turning his eyes upward to the mast-head; while the mate still lay in his blanket, with Celeste's pink knitted hood resting cosily against his arm. The sight somehow brought a lump into my throat, and I looked

She made a little eloquent gesture of the hands.

"Please do not say that. Those words are always the last effort to bolster up courage. Keep them for the men, but trust me with the exact truth."

"Ask, and I will answer."

"What chance have we of rescue?"

I turned my eyes away before venturing to reply, yet I dared not utter an untruth.

"Two: the being picked up by some passing vessel, or the attaining of inhabitable land."

"Are there any vessels in this sea at this season?"

"It is hardly probable there are, unless it should be some whaler blown from her course around the Horn."

"Then our only practical hope lies in reaching land by our own efforts?" She leaned forward, her hand touching mine as it grasped the tiller, her earnest eyes compelling me to look at her.

"Yes."

"How — how far away is this land?"

I hesitated, actually afraid myself to speak the answer, but her handclasp merely tightened.

"Please tell me. I — I wish to know the very worst. Such knowledge will be easier to bear than this awful doubt."

"But I hardly know myself," I confessed desperately. "I have had no observation for several days, and can only guess the rate of progress of the *Sea Queen*, or our drift during the storm. I will be perfectly honest with you, though, and give you my best judgment. I believe we must be between four and five hundred miles to the

east and north of Dougherty Island, and not yet beyond the limit of drift ice. There would be no use in our attempting to turn back for that point of land, as it is nothing but a rock, and we could never find it by the mere guidance of a compass. Our only chance is to bear away to the northeast toward land and the track of ships."

"How far? What land?"

"The western coast of South America; at least fifteen hundred miles."

I felt her shudder, and scarcely realizing that I did so, or the significance of the action, impelled by an impulse beyond all control, I drew her hand within both my own as though in pledge of protection.

"It can be done," I insisted. "Such boat voyages have been accomplished."

She made no effort to draw away, her eyes still upon mine.

"Not through such a sea as this; not at this season of the year."

I could not answer, my lips dry, my throat parched.

"You know the utter hopelessness of it," she went on, stimulated by my silence. "You know we can never survive the cold, the closing in of the ice, the certainty of storm. You are a sailor, and a brave man — trust me with the whole truth."

"It would be almost a miracle," I faltered, the words fairly forced from my lips by her insistence. "This is the beginning of winter in the stormiest ocean on the globe. God could do it, but not man."

Her head sank, the white cheek touching my sleeve,

but the fearless gray eyes were still open, gazing straight into mine.

"Then it is the certainty of death," she said soberly. "Death together."

My heart leaped as though it had received an electric shock.

"Together! you mean —"

"That I should rather be here, facing death with you, than anywhere else alone," she exclaimed swiftly. "Oh, I can say it frankly now; say it here before you and God; say it in all purity and honor. Perhaps to-night, perhaps to-morrow, somewhere amid this awful waste of waters we will go together into eternity. What are the dictates of men to us now? What meaning is there any longer to the hideous requirements of the world? We are beyond them all. Here, now, we can be ourselves, ourselves. To-night we are free; to-night I can hear you speak what I have already read in your eyes, and am not afraid to hear it."

"You — you love me?"

"With all my heart and soul."

With everything else blotted out, with all else forgotten, I sat speechless, gazing down through the mist of tears into her eyes.

CHAPTER XXV

IN WHICH I UNDERSTAND MY LADY

SHE rested motionless, her cheek barely touching my sleeve, her eyes filled with love, her hands in mine. A sleeper in the bottom of the boat stirred uneasily, tossing his arms; Kelly leaned far forward to refasten a loosened sheet, sinking back upon his seat to stare moodily out at the gray sea; a heavy wave struck us, showering icy spray to the masthead, and the boom swung to and fro, its end dipping into the sea, the longboat laying down under the sudden gust. Then I heard her voice, soft as a whisper, the breath of her lips on my cheek.

"You will not misjudge me; surely you can not. Those words would never have been uttered in any other circumstances. Not that I am afraid, not that I am ashamed or regretful; but nothing else could ever have set me free. Now we must know, understand each other — we must die with our hearts open, our souls clean. You really love me? trust me? believe me to be a worthy woman?"

"With all my soul I do."

"Oh, I know you do. It is because I know you do that I wish to tell you my story. It is my love which makes me so anxious that you should understand, so

when the end comes we can go together, loving each other, and not afraid. Do you recognize me? Have you ever realized who I am?"

I could only shake my head, wondering at the strange question.

"No? And yet I have known you ever since that first long talk we had together in the cabin. It seemed so odd, such a strange freak of destiny, that you should have been associated in any way with my old life, and yet the very fact that you were, first created the bond that has since drawn us together. You were no longer a mere sea-adventurer, but an old-time friend and equal. From that day all was different. I could fight it back, but could never conquer what that discovery meant. Oh, how small this world is! Did you ever hear of Doris Winslow?"

A moment the vague, clouded memory eluded me, tantalized me. Then in a flash the revelation came.

"My sister's chum at Wellesley?"

The tears sprang glistening into her eyes, her hand-clasp tightening.

"Yes; does it seem possible? You never knew me, except by name. My father died during the second year of my attendance there; then mother and I went abroad, and my education was completed on the Continent. I am not finding fault, but — but it was all most unfortunate; it brought me into real life with a false understanding of everything — wrong ideals, wrong standards. We were known to be wealthy, many considered me beautiful; my mother's one ambition was to achieve recognized social standing in Europe, and from the first I was

destined to be a means to that end. My education, surroundings, social environment, were all shaped with this purpose in view. In spite of myself the result was accomplished.

"I was merely a girl of seventeen, desiring little but a good time, and accustomed all my life to the guidance of others. Lord Darlington joined our party in Italy, and we journeyed together for a week through the Italian Alps, finally going on board his yacht as invited guests for a cruise in the Mediterranean. He was most attentive to me, yet I gave it scarcely a thought. I was in love with the sea, fascinated with this new experience, and flattered by the continued kindness showered upon me. I was a thoughtless girl, utterly heart-free, unaccustomed to deciding any important matters for myself. I hardly realized what was taking place — what it all meant, but — but one day we went ashore, and — and we were married at the British Legation in Athens. That day I was a careless girl; the next morning found me a woman, regretful, aroused from a dream, yet yielding to the inevitable. Whatever I suffered was borne alone; not even my mother ever heard me complain."

She sat looking forth over the crests of the sea, the moonlight reflecting back into her face. The sail swung in and shadowed her.

"Within a month we went to England, to Darlington Hall, where everything was at my command, and later to London, during the social season. I had all that the world seems to value at my feet and at first I managed to be happy after a fashion. The excitement and exhila-

ration kept me alive and interested, but in time the glitter and artificiality of it all wearied me; more and more deeply I realized the sordid manner in which I had been sold, and I grew to hate those things which had purchased me. It was not Lord Darlington — he was more father than husband, humoring me in every way, and secretly regretful of his part in the transaction. I became ill, begged for the sea, and we went abroad in his yacht. He was not unwilling, but to my mother it proved a constant hardship. Only her anxiety to prevent any rupture between us caused her to go on board. Yet even when I had recovered health I would not go back; that life would have killed me. Out in the open I could breathe and live; it yielded me courage to continue as I was."

She bent forward, bringing her face once again into the revealing moonlight, her eyes frankly open to mine.

"I only wish I could make you realize how drearily lonely that life became. There was no knowledge of love to complicate the situation, and at first I even felt a sense of gratitude toward Lord Darlington for many acts of kindness and the consideration shown me. This changed, however, as I began slowly to comprehend the selfishness of his motives — that his actions arose merely from a certain pride in my youthful appearance and the advantages to be derived from my wealth. My mother soon alienated my affections by always allying herself with him. Finally I had no one to whom I could turn for comfort or advice. I felt entirely alone, and grew silent, suspicious, and averse to all social pleasures. The vows of marriage rested lightly on Lord Darlington, but for

that I did not greatly care, except that the knowledge snapped the last weak bond between us. Almost wild to escape from Europe and its torturing memories I finally planned an extensive yachting trip around the world. I was impulsive, headstrong, even hopeful that I might be permitted to invite a few congenial friends and sail alone. To my surprise Lord Darlington expressed pleasure in the idea, and even persuaded my mother to accompany us."

Her face sank suddenly into her hands, her body trembling.

"I bore it all smilingly, and enjoyed the sea. But I was a woman now, bitterly resenting the manner in which I had been bartered in the matrimonial market. I knew nothing of love, except as I perceived it in the lives of others, but I was hungry, starving for it. We arrived at Valparaiso; this strange adventure occurred to me, and — and then I met you."

Her hands went out again to me, and I caught them eagerly.

"That — that day in the cabin, I — I knew you for one of my own class; I knew you for a true man, a gentleman; I — I read the love in your eyes, and I should have been an angel not to have welcomed it. Oh, God knows I tried not to do so! I prayed for help to resist my own heart, but the help was not given me. Now I comprehend it was not meant that I should resist. The end was in sight even from the beginning. Love is more than ceremony, and can make even death sweet. I have no sense of evil as I look into your eyes; I have come into my inheritance, the rightful in-

heritance of every woman — love. Even if it is only for a day, it is mine, — mine by the gift of God. Oh, Jack, Jack, I have waited so long, so long, and now all I can say, all I desire to say, is, I love you!"

Oh, that scene! that desolate, dreary, God-forsaken, hopeless scene, — the heaving waters, the cold sky, the ice-gleam, the awful expanse of barrenness all about. Did ever love come to mortal before or since in such a spot, or amid such utter helplessness? But I forgot all, though even as I bent to her lips she begged me, falteringly, not to touch her yet. There, in the heart of that Antarctic sea, castaways, drifting to what seemed certain death, we found in this confession a happiness that the world without would have sternly denied us. Ay! and we were stronger for it, braver for it; our eyes aglow, our hearts pulsing to the one great music of the universe.

"Tell it to me," she whispered smilingly.

"I love you."

"And I am happier than in all my life before."

We spoke but briefly as we sat thus, my hand firm upon the tiller, my eyes never forgetful of those great surges smiting us. Indeed, there was little to say, for we had no future to discuss, no plans to formulate. We could only live out the night, with the morrow a blank before us. Yet there was nothing of all this in the girl's face, upturned and happy, nor did I permit my eyes to mar her happiness. We were together, understanding each other, and for the moment that was enough. Yet in some way my pulse beat stronger, my will to conquer this demon sea became mighty. God helping me, this

love-life should not end here, — end in mystery and oblivion; those restless waters should not overcome us forever. I would fight them for her sake and my own! All this new life had come to us not in mere mockery but in promise; it could not be the will of the Almighty that it should be born merely to perish. Out of danger it had been made possible; out of danger it should come forth triumphant. The certainty of death had unlocked her lips to a confession of the truth, the woman in her conquering all sense of evil; and now the man in me arose supreme, eager to battle for possession. The stars and waves defied such determination, yet I only stiffened in my seat, a new strength animating my body, a new faith stimulating my soul. Fifteen hundred miles! Father of Mercy, guide us! Yet it had been done, and it might be done again.

"What is it, Jack?" she questioned softly. "Of what were you thinking?"

"Of the stiff battle ahead of us, dear; the fight for life and love across these leagues of ocean."

"For life and love! Do you mean you dream of reaching safety?"

"I mean to struggle for it; to do all a man and sailor may. If we die now, sweetheart, it will be to lose more than ever before was possible."

Her cheeks flushed instantly, her lashes drooping.

"No, no; if we win safety it will only be to lose all else. But the thought is impossible; no skill, no courage, no strength of arm or heart could ever work such a miracle of deliverance. I will not dream it, for how could I go back, go back to that old life again with my

heart full of love for you? That would be a fate worse than death; it would be dishonor."

I did not answer, did not even look into her face.

"Surely you do not mean it, Jack?" almost pleadingly, her hand reaching blindly out for mine. "You can not bring me to such shame, such trial?"

"It is not shame," I answered earnestly, all my soul revolting against the word, "it may be trial, but it is not shame. In the face of death you have confessed you love me, and in the face of death I shall endeavor to retain that love. I should be no man if I did less. Shame! Do not use that term between us. What was there holy or divine in the selling of you to that English peer? Why should that act of mere barter hold us apart? The law of God is paramount to the law of man. Doris, you are mine, although you yet withhold the pledge of the lips; mine everywhere and forever; mine here in this desolate reach of sea, and mine yonder in the great world if we ever again attain it. I never will yield you up to another; never relinquish my claim. Words have been spoken between us that can never be recalled; they are irrevocable, and to my mind more sacred than those of Athens. I love you, love you, love you, and that means I will fight to save you, fight to keep you. Against nature and man I shall endeavor to hold what is my own."

One moment I gazed down into her eyes, penetrating to the gray depths, and perceiving there a sudden outburst of passion which she did not even seek to conceal. It was a revelation absolute and complete, a revelation never to be forgotten. Yet she did not touch me, did

not answer in words, and in another instant her glance turned away out over the grim desolation of waters. I was still looking at her, intoxicated by what I had seen when she pointed excitedly forward.

"In Heaven's name, what is that?"

Hardly had my glance shifted when Kelly leaped to his feet, his voice raised in a wild yell.

"Mither of God, sorr, there 's a ship!"

CHAPTER XXVI

IN WHICH WE BOARD A DERELICT

I SAW the sleepers cast off their coverings and rise up startled and staring, but I could only gaze dumbly at the apparition before us, doubting the evidence of my own eyes and unable to utter a sound. At that first glance I believed the thing illusion, a mirage of the deep, a shadow-ship mocking us with semblance to reality. The cold silvery light played along her glistening side, causing the whole extent of the vessel to gleam back into our eyes like a great mirror, while the very shape and form of the silently gliding spectre appeared a survival from out the dead past, a ghastly relic of centuries gone uplifted from those sombre depths below. Through my brain swept memories of the "Flying Dutchman," and many a weird tale of the deep sea. The silence, gloom, the dim outline of the great hull, the strange glimmer of it from bow to stern; all combined to make it seem a ghost-ship, sported with by the waves. It moved slowly under the impelling power of the wind beating against the broad high stern, the blunt bows scarcely rippling the water, passing almost directly across our track, appearing more like a painted picture than anything constructed of wood and iron. Out of the night, dim, visionary, it swam before us, a weird, uncanny thing, chilling the blood with its ghostliness. I rubbed

my eyes, staring at the silvery reflection, my heart pulsing with a horror which set me trembling. I heard the startled exclamations of the others, yet could do nothing but lean forward, believing that every instant that strange vision would vanish, dissolve in air, or disappear into the gleaming sea.

Yet, little by little, my mind began to apprehend the truth, my reason to grasp the details. Mist or reality, there directly before us floated what appeared to be the outlines of a ship — battered, wrecked, odd in form — yet a ship, moving upright upon the surface of the waters. I shaded my eyes, striving desperately to master and comprehend the actual things I saw, endeavoring to fight back the numbing doubt in my heart. Good God! what a mad dream of the past was represented yonder! Those round, blunt bows, the broken bowsprit, heavy as a mast, forking straight upward; the great carven, shapeless figurehead beneath; the wide, elevated forecastle deck; the seemingly tremendous thickness of the bulwarks; the strange slope of deck and rail amidships; the immense remnant of a foremast towering in splinters; the broad, square stern, even over-topping the height of the peaked forecastle. That was a grim thing to meet with in those waters. And what was it — a vision of loneliness? a dream of dying men? a mirage born of moon and shadow? a plaything of wave and air? or the real resurrection of a ship of the olden time, a bit of death driven back by the polar ice? I knew not, yet all the others saw as I saw; it was no illusion of my brain alone, and realizing this I sat up, gripping my teeth in determination at action.

"Stand by, men!" I called, the tremble still in my command. "If the thing yonder be wood and iron we'll board her."

Not a voice responded, their bodies tense and motionless, every eye still on that dim, phantom gleam. With clenched teeth I pressed the tiller hard down, and the bows of the long-boat headed straight in. Suddenly De Nova leaped to his feet.

"Ship ahoy!" he yelled, the note of fear sounding shrilly.

In the intense silence I could plainly hear the heavy breathing of the excited men.

"There will be no use hailing," I said, strengthened by the sound of my own voice. "If that be a vessel, her crew are dead a hundred years."

"And by God, it is, sir!" ejaculated Johnson, who was on his knees in the bow. "It's a real ship all right. That's ice that glitters; she's sheeted in it from stem to stern."

I saw it myself then, every doubt of the real character of this drear visitant vanishing; my courage came back in a rush.

"Ay, ay, lads, Johnson has hit it right. That's a ship for us, and now we'll see what she looks like on deck. Get a grip with your boat-hook, Johnson, on that raft of stuff trailing from the forechains, when I lay her alongside. Strike the wood if you can, the cordage is likely to be rotten."

He missed it at the first attempt, the hook slipping on the ice; but as I brought the long-boat around once more, he succeeded in getting a grip upon something sufficiently

firm and held on, the fellows staring up silently at the bulging side, and touching the thick sheathing of ice as though half demented. And it gave me a chill to feel that great silent bulk towering over us, the huge forechain bulging above, the ghastly glisten everywhere.

"Make fast. Break the ice out of that ring, Kelly, and pass a stout rope through it. Now furl the sail, the rest of you. Fend her off, Cole; that's all right, keep your oar there. Mr. De Nova, you will remain in charge of the boat. I'll see what she looks like aboard; Johnson, come along with me."

I picked my way forward into the bows, and stood up, striving to obtain some kind of a grip on the forechains which would enable me to haul myself up. Everything I touched was ice, so thick as to render objects shapeless.

"Give me a lift, Kelly; easy, now, until I get a handhold. There, that will do, my lad."

It was a slippery, dangerous perch, the vessel plunging somewhat, but the upper ice was slightly powdered with snow, yielding a little purchase, and I finally discovered a brace for my feet which enabled me to reach down, and assist Johnson to scramble up beside me. Fortunately the bulwarks were not so high proportionately as wide, and we succeeded in sliding over them, coming down rather heavily on the solid deck. Here the snow made walking possible, although underneath the ice was thick and smooth, compelling caution. The sight revealed, as we came to our feet, appeared ghastly enough under that spectral light flooding it all, the snow and ice everywhere gleaming with misty radiance. It was a picture of complete wreck. All forward was a terrible raffle of wreckage,

a jumbled mass of tangled spars, with the great topmast and all its hamper right where it had fallen, a portion of the port bulwark smashed flat. A hummock of ice rose like a great hill from abaft the butt of the foremast, which stuck up maybe thirty feet, clear over the forecastle deck, leaving everything shapeless and grotesque. Where the slope was steepest, the wind had swept away the snow, leaving the ice beneath clear; and there, frozen completely in, like a painted picture, was the fully revealed body of a man. I never saw any sight more grewsome than that ice-shrouded figure; the arms outstretched, the short, black beard rendering more ghastly the white, dead face. I gripped my hands onto Johnson's shoulder, and he was shaking like an aspen, his own face colorless in the moonshine. I wheeled him about savagely.

"Don't lose your nerve, man. You 've seen dead men before. Come, there 's nothing to do here; we 'll try how she looks aft."

He followed me like a dog, casting uneasy glances backward over his shoulder. The deck was clearer of raffle beyond the foremast, a great gap in the port-bulwarks amidships showing where the wreckage had probably been swept overboard. The mainmast had been ripped out, leaving a great, ugly gash in the deck planks, and in falling had so smashed flat one corner of the cook's galley that we could look in through the jagged opening thus left. All the front portion was snow and ice, but the further extremity appeared dry enough, revealing a brick oven, a table screwed to the wall, and an overturned scuttle of coals littering the deck. It was not a desirable spot, yet would afford protection from the

frosty night wind, and be much better than the open boat. Besides, I realized how those others must feel down there, bobbing up and down against those ice-caked sides.

"Johnson," I said, my eyes wandering toward the dimly revealed front of the after-cabin, which appeared utterly shapeless under its mantle. "We 've got quite a job ahead of us to break through this wreckage. She 's an old one, and frozen up so tight we 'll be compelled to chop ice to discover even where her cabin entrance is. It must have taken years down yonder to have sealed her up like this. I 'm for having the rest of the crew up to help us. Climb over into the main-chains, and cut out some steps with your knife. We 'll have them drop back there and unload. Then the women won't be obliged to see that dead man for'ard."

He was some minutes at the task, and I occupied the time in kicking aside some of the litter in the galley and making the dreary interior a bit more decent, having the men pass up some spare blankets, and spreading them out on deck. Finally Kelly and the negro scrambled up, and between us we succeeded in lifting Lady Darlington and Celeste over the icy bulwarks. The latter clung sobbing to De Nova, but my lady gazed about her wonderingly, her eyes full of questions. Without speaking we stowed them away under shelter.

"She is certainly a relic," I paused long enough to say, "one of the old-timers in these seas. From the look of her she must have been locked up in the ice south there for a century."

"Do you expect to sail her northward?"

"I hardly know yet what to expect; that remains to be

seen. She seems to ride the water stanchly enough and there is fully thirty feet of mast standing yonder. Anyhow, this deck at present is better than an open boat."

"But — but it is all so ghastly, so ghost-like — Celeste is fairly crazy from the horror."

"It is merely the effect of the moonlight glimmering on the ice; everything is ice wherever your eyes turn. But you are safe enough here, and with daylight the ghostliness of it will vanish."

"Where are you going now?"

"To break into the cabin; then we will have a decent place in which to stay — perhaps a chance for a fire."

I perceived from the expression upon her face how the being left alone on this grewsome ship frightened her, but I dare not take her into my arms, as I longed to do, and woo back her failing courage. Indeed, there was that about our situation which caused my own heart to beat fast, yet I clasped her hand, and compelled her to sit down beside Celeste.

"It is not likely to prove a long job, and I will be back to you shortly. Don't let the night shadows frighten you so."

She smiled back into my eyes bravely enough, although I realized the effort of will that it cost; and so I left her endeavoring to cheer the girl, who was sobbing wildly, with her face buried in her hands.

The men joined me as I stepped without, crunching the light snow under their heavy boots, and staring uneasily about them as though the whole adventure was a dream. Lord! and no more could I shake off that same impression as I surveyed the scene aft. A boat, bottom

up, the planks smashed beyond repair, lay against the starboard rail. The after-cabin, built like a house, extended the entire width of the deck, a lumping affair, overhung with huge, projecting timbers, topped by ornate carvings, and having two companionways leading up, one of them crushed into splinters. The forward shutters were tightly closed, and the whole front appeared a solid mass of glittering ice, so obscured by frozen particles of snow as to render any discovery of the door an impossibility. We began hacking at it with our knives, judging the opening would naturally be at the centre, but the sheathing of ice proved so thick and solid that we made little impression.

"It would take us a week to cut our way in with these things," I said at last. "De Nova, I think I saw an axe frozen in at the left of the galley. Take a man with you and pry it out."

It proved an odd-looking instrument, — a meat-cleaver, I imagine, — but was sufficiently strong and heavy. Kelly swung it vigorously, cleaving off the ice in cakes, until we were finally able to trace the fitting of the door. Suddenly, striking at the upper panel, he dislodged a considerable chunk, thus revealing half a dozen letters painted across the front. Dade pried off a few inches more with his knife-blade, and we stared up incredulously at the words:

Doña Isabel
Cadiz

"Holy Mother of God!" and De Nova, in his excitement, danced about recklessly, forgetting the slipperiness of deck underfoot. "It was ze treasure ship! It was ze t'ree million *pesos!* *Sacre* dam'!"

It does not appear possible that I perceived it all, but now, looking back, I can recall the attitude of every man as this revelation of the vessel's identity was swiftly borne in upon his consciousness. Sanchez sank affrightedly to his knees, fingering the beads of a rosary, his lips muttering inarticulate fragments of prayer; Dade stared, white-faced and trembling, his mouth wide open; Kelly jerked his cap from off his red hair and swung it over his head with a wild yell; Johnson never stirred, a motionless statue, his lips compressed; the negro joined De Nova, his eyes rolling, his great feet pounding the snow; while McKnight grabbed the axe from Kelly's heedless fingers and began slashing at the door. As for myself, at the instant everything was chaos. Tuttle was right, then; he had seen all that he said; our voyage had not been causeless, a search after a will-o'-the-wisp; the sacrifices, suffering, loss of these past months, were not all in vain. Out of Antarctic solitudes, released from the merciless grip of the ice by some marvel of deliverance, this treasure galleon of Old Spain, this ancient tomb of dead sailors, had come drifting down to us, a veritable gift of God. The knowledge stunned me; dazed my perceptions. It seemed a miracle. I could only press my hands to my eyes, stare blindly at that inscription, and struggle back to a conception of reality. It was Kelly's wild shout and McKnight's blow that aroused me, recalling me as instantly to command.

"Stop that!" I shouted, catching the latter roughly by the arm. "We shall need that cabin door. If there indeed be a treasure down below, we can hunt for it like men and not maniacs. McKnight, if you strike another blow I'll drop you where you stand. Take knives and dig the ice out of the cracks. Get down on your knees at the bottom, Dade, and don't stand there like a fool. De Nova, see if you can locate the front windows — there must be two of them — and cut the ice away from the shutters."

As they labored feverishly, their breath steaming in the frosty air, the moonlight silvering them and gleaming weirdly on the scattered ice-fragments, the haunting mystery of that hermetically sealed cabin brought to me a feeling of unutterable horror. Heaven! how long had it been thus frozen in? What awful tragedy of another century was about to be revealed? What years of loneliness, of darkness, of polar night and cold had this derelict of the grim Antarctic experienced? Where had it been? What scenes of ice and snow, of storm, desolation, and death had it known during those hundred years of helpless wreck? What of those who had sailed on board out of Guayaquil that fair June day of 1753, dreaming of the glad welcome awaiting them in sunny Spain? What of the crew, hardy seamen all, black-bearded, the gold loops in their ears? What of the passengers? What of the five women who had walked these decks? Where had they died, and how? What terrible secret of the cold and storm lurked behind this ice-barrier we were breaking down?

I clenched my hands, my nerves throbbing, tramping

from rail to rail in excitement as the men hacked, yet I was first to grasp the exposed latch, and force the released wood backward in its grooves. Through the narrow opening thus attained there came whistling a blast so frigid as to drive us headlong back, gasping for breath. Cold as it was without there on the open deck, that cabin revealed a temperature so awful in intensity as to make us recoil before it, our hands to our faces. A hundred years of winter — the black eternal winter of the South Pole — smote us with icy breath, seeming fairly to sear the flesh with its frozen touch. Dade dropped under it, and we dragged him aside, sobbing like a baby. It was several minutes before we could even draw near enough to hack away more of the ice and, with the axe, drive the door farther back into its grooves.

It was intensely dark within, every window and port-hole shrouded, only the narrow door-opening permitting the slight glimmer of the moon to touch the edge of the black interior. I wrapped my muffler to the very eyes, and stepped across the threshold, feeling as if the icy air grasped me with actual fingers, yet resolute to learn all, and confident no other there would ever venture it. There were no steps, the main-deck leading directly aft, and I shuffled blindly ahead, groping my way in the dark with extended hands, my heart pounding like a trip-hammer. I touched an overturned bench with my knee; my fingers explored the back of a heavy chair having a carven top, and then came into contact with a bare table, heavily ridged along the edge. Seemingly this stood crossways of the cabin; and I felt cautiously along it, a deeper cowardice gripping me with every

hesitating step forward in the dark. Suddenly I touched hair and the gelid coldness of frozen flesh, and as instantly leaped backward, mad with nameless terror. The overturned bench tripped me, and I fell, grasping at the door casements, and thus dragged myself out of that hell-hole by my arms.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN WHICH I EXPLORE THE CABIN

DE NOVA assisted me to my feet, the other men crowding about, their faces filled with wonderment. "For God's sake, w'at is it, monsieur?"

"There are dead men in there," I explained, already ashamed of my display of terror. "I — I touched one in the dark."

They drew back from the open door, gazing with new horror into the blackness of the interior; but my own courage was rapidly returning, as I realized that I must lead and control.

"Well, lads, it startled me all right, but we can not afford to give up this ship to dead men. De Nova, take Kelly with you, and try to discover something on board with which to make a flare. There ought to be plenty of dry stuff in the galley. Not a word to the women about what I found aft."

The rest of us hacked away, while they were gone, at the ice concealing the front window shutters, and partly uncovered one. But we could get no purchase upon it from the outside and no one volunteered to venture within. I kept them all busy, however, the hard work and sense of command combining to restore my own

nerves to a normal condition. The mate despairing of doing better, finally brought back a table-leg of pitch pine which we contrived to ignite after several unsuccessful experiments, the yellowish-red flames circling the heavy end like so many coiling serpents, and sending forth a weird reflection through spirals of black smoke. It was a poor glim enough, yet it would serve; and I bore it inside, holding the torch well before me, the men clustering about the door.

The mottled flare cast mingled light and shadow over the horrors thus dimly revealed, rendering the ghastly sight one to chill the blood of any man. I stood, feeling as if my limbs were paralyzed, staring about, the extended torch shaking in my hand. The cabin was a long one, extending aft clear to the stern, the immense butt of the mizzen-mast almost separating it into two apartments. About this was arranged a great arm-rack, completely filled with a variety of weapons, many of them flashing back the glittering rays of the torch. Along both sides were doors, several standing wide-open, while the entire interior was of a dull gray, ornamented with a lavish profusion of gilt decoration everywhere. At one time that had been a rare sea-parlor, but now it was a wreck, the walls and ceiling dingy with smoke, the gilt defaced and battered. Overturned furniture was everywhere; piles of clothing, and a perfect riffraff of articles strewed the deck floor; a violin lay almost at my feet, all but one string snapped; and some sort of an odd music-box rested against the bench over which I had fallen. A great square box-stove stood just before the mast-butt, a huge pile of ashes all about. An

immense lantern, as strange a looking contrivance as ever I saw, swung solemnly from a deck-beam, and just beyond, suspended by wires, was a gorgeously colored picture of the Madonna and Child.

I beheld all these details at a glance, although at the time I scarcely realized any of them, my entire horrified attention being riveted upon the scene of death revealed. The table, which I had previously touched, extending crossways the cabin, was uncovered, but contained plates, cups, a large bottle half-filled, and some scraps of frozen food. The bodies of two men, one with a cloak over his shoulders, occupied the bench within three feet of me. The one nearest had fallen sideways, and hung there, his arm hooked across the back of the bench, his long, black hair dangling over his face; the other sat with head bowed on the table, his features hidden by his arms, but the gold rings in his ears plainly showing. Directly opposite these two, sitting bolt upright in a chair, eyes wide-open, staring straight at me, was a third. My God! it was De Nova! The same eyes, the same dark curly hair, the same little black moustache, the same smile curling the thin lips. I could have sworn it was the mate, endeavoring to frighten and mock me. I even wheeled about angrily, flashing the light of my torch over that cluster of faces in the doorway. No! by Heavens, the creole stood behind, and this, this counterpart, was a dead man — dead for a hundred years. No words can ever retell the struggle I made to control myself, the smoking torch shaking in my hand and casting its miserable flicker over that charnel house, every limb trembling like aspens, my eyes staring into the shadows.

My very violence of fear angered me; what had I to be afraid of? How could these poor frozen bodies injure me? Nerved to the endeavor I stepped forward around the end of the table, throwing the faint glare of the torch into the after space concealed by the huge mast-butt. A tall, thin man sat on the deck, braced against the wall, his long, gray beard almost concealing his face; on a wide divan, nearly opposite, lay a woman, her dark hair loosened, a large diamond glittering on the hand which hung rigid over the edge of the couch. Just below her fingers, as if dropped there in final weakness, lay a baby's well-worn shoe.

I scarcely comprehend how I ever conquered the sickly horror that smote me as I gazed about upon this scene of death, rendered even more terrible by the silence and the flickering, smoking torch that furnished the only light. Nothing except the sense of command, the remembrance of those women waiting outside in the cook's galley, ever afforded me strength and courage to remain. The task must be done; by some one it must be accomplished, and that some one, of necessity, was myself. With clenched teeth, my face as white as those of the frozen dead about me, I advanced from door to door down one side of that cabin, and up the other. Out from the state-rooms that had remained closed there came the same awful breath of the frigid South, rendering even the icy air of the main cabin ten times colder, and causing me to breathe with difficulty as I peered hastily within. These state-rooms were all of fair size, the two situated farthest aft being unusually large and comfortably fitted, although in great

disorder. In one only did I discover a body, that of a child of three or four years, flaxen-haired and bonny even in death. Upon the deck at the foot of the mast I discovered the vessel's log-book lying wide open, a quill pen beside it, exactly as it had been dropped. I did not take time to decipher the Spanish, inscribed in a scrawling hand, but my glance caught the date of that last entry — "September 11, 1753."

The date rang in my head crazily as I stood there staring at them, totally unable to grasp or apprehend the truth. *One hundred and twenty-six years!* — Merciful God! And all that time those men had been there at that table; all through those days and nights, those months and years, that frozen image of De Nova had been smiling, his cold fingers clutching the glass; all through those decades that woman had been lying on the couch, that flaxen-haired baby in the bunk! There, exactly as we found them, during a century of inky blackness, tossed about by the sea, cradled in the pitiless ice, smitten by the awful breath of eternal Winter, those bodies had remained rigid, motionless, even as the souls left them, for one hundred and twenty-six years! It was unthinkable, inconceivable, miraculous, beyond all my power of apprehension. Blessed Mary! what changes the world had witnessed since these died! What wonders of discovery; what growth in faith; what widening of human knowledge; what generations of men and women had been born, lived, loved, and died since the deadly ice locked these into this floating tomb!

Not until after I had explored the last empty room

and returned to the group at the door did I regain my senses and feel myself again a living, responsible being upon whose strength of will depended the future of all on board. A glance into those horrified faces told me instantly that they were ready for a mad retreat to the boat; that the slightest exhibition of weakness on my part would set them into a panic. I stiffened into resistance, all memory of the past blotted out utterly by the demands of the present.

"Men, we 've come into a hard job here, but it is one which must be attended to," I said gravely. "However, we 'll wait until after breakfast before tackling the worst of it. Day is beginning now, and we will need all the light it gives us. Dade, get out some provisions from the boat, start a fire in the galley, and prepare a hot meal. Sanchez, go along and help; you will probably have to cut away some ice before the fire will draw. Not a word to the women about what you have seen aft, my lads."

The two started forward willingly enough, and I immediately turned to the others, marking their uneasy glances, and fully assured that I must keep them also busily employed, or else lose control altogether.

"We have too much to accomplish here to waste any time while those fellows are getting a meal ready," I continued quickly. "McKnight, you tackle these front shutters. Kelly, climb up on the poop and dig the ice off the skylight and out of the funnel. We 've got to have daylight and a fire. Now, De Nova, I want you and Johnson to help me. Come on, men; what are you two afraid of? These are all dead."

I fairly drove them to it, but it did them both good, although the manner in which they advanced down the cabin, their faces blanched under the torch glare, their bodies shaking as with ague, made me nervous and irritable. I put them at the after-ports, Johnson with the cleaver, and De Nova with his sheath-knife, and between the three of us we finally succeeded in wrenching both stern-ports free of their icy fetters. As we burst them open, through the wide apertures we looked forth into the gray dreariness of the dawn. Satisfied with what had thus been accomplished, we retraced our steps back through the cabin, observing that Kelly had made some progress above, the faint daylight already beginning to tinge that grim interior.

That breakfast was the first warm meal any of us had enjoyed for five days, and we ate it together, sitting about on the galley deck. The men were unusually silent, even the voluble Kelly holding his tongue. No doubt their thoughts were with their perilous situation and the grewsome task confronting them; yet they partook heartily of the food, and I endeavored by every means in my power to arouse their courage and cheerfulness. To that end I dwelt on the possibility of the wealth that might be concealed between decks, promising an early search. But I spoke most to Lady Darlington, admiring greatly the easy manner in which she bore herself amid such rude surroundings and adapted herself to the necessities of our situation. All semblance of pride and exclusiveness had vanished, and she was a simple-hearted woman, bearing her trials with silent fortitude. Only once did she even refer to our discoveries aft, and

then only to appear perfectly satisfied when I explained that the cabin was in such disorder it would have to be cleaned before fit for occupancy. Rough as the experience of the previous night had been, her dress soiled, her hair ruffled, never had she appeared more attractive than when, sitting in the midst of us on that galley deck with the gray daylight streaming in through the broken roof, the ruddy flames of the fire flickered across her face. I saw the men glance toward her in respectful admiration as they filed out one by one, and thus left us for a moment alone. No matter what words I whispered in the brief time before I joined them, but as I glanced back where she remained standing, there was a smile upon her lips and a mist of tears in her eyes. As for myself, I was prepared for the work of the day.

The wind continued to hold steady from the southwest, the sea somewhat heavy, but coming in a long, regular rolling which sent us drifting forward, the helpless hulk staggering as the racing crests burst against its ice-coated side. The high overhang of the immense stern served us well, however, catching the full sweep of the wind and so aiding to overcome the pounding force of the waves. I cast an anxious glance about the misty horizon, but perceiving nothing presaging any change of weather, I determined to utilize the short hours of daylight in making the cabin habitable. The urgent need of getting some form of sail up and of releasing the rudder was indeed imperative; any approach of storm would have found us utterly helpless. Yet we could not live on board with those frozen bodies aft. I left Dade busied in the galley, and took the others with me. They went

reluctantly, grumbling among themselves, yet I permitted them no opportunity for open revolt, driving them to the work I had decided upon, and shaming them by leading the way myself.

I need not dwell upon the unpleasant details. The most disagreeable portion fell to me, although Johnson took hold like a man after the first few moments of reluctance. The others devoted themselves diligently to scraping off the ice, gathering up and casting overboard the accumulation of litter about the main cabin and the various state-rooms, and assisting us only as we passed the heavy, rigid bodies through the stern-ports. We performed this unpleasant task of burial hastily, but with all gentleness ; there was little to do except to wrap the stiffened figures as best we might, weight them, though they were themselves like stone, and consign them to the gray sea. Not heartlessly, but with unspoken prayers upon our lips, we watched them sink silently into the depths they had resisted so long. Never shall I forget the face of the child, the last to be buried, nor the sickening feeling with which I sank back upon a bench, staring about the vacated cabin when the awful task was finally accomplished; yet the realization that it was over with, the cabin cleared and habitable, made new men of all of us. The bedding was brought forth and aired before the open ports, the furniture restored to position, and a fire started in the huge box-stove. This quickly warmed the icy interior and yielded a new aspect of cheerfulness. De Nova and Kelly explored the steward's pantry, discovering a quantity of frozen biscuit, several hams rigid as rock, together with numerous flasks of some liquid turned into

solid ice. We found candles also, hard as nails, though they burned fairly well after a period of sputtering, and we fitted six of them into the great lantern. By noon we had completed the work, and had brought Lady Darlington and Celeste aft for dinner.

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN WHICH WE LEARN THE STORY OF THE DONNA ISABEL

THE short Antarctic day left us little opportunity for work on deck. However, I kept the men employed as long as possible, first setting them at hauling up the long-boat and stowing it safely away under shelter, and then at untangling some of the raffle forward. They went at this last task rather unwillingly, for it was carried on in full view of that ice-casketed figure guarding the forecastle, yet they got out two fairly serviceable spars and a considerable amount of cordage so protected by the ice coating as to be still of value. When we finally knocked off and started aft in a body, a dark, cloudy night was about us, the snow falling so thickly as to make it impossible to see across the deck. Dade was busily preparing supper in the wrecked galley, the red glare of his fire shining forth through the drifting flakes, while glimpses of light stole out in welcome from the forward cabin windows.

The latter appeared shipshape and cheerful enough as we slid back the door and stepped within. Scarcely a reminder was left of that horrible interior dominated by death which had been revealed to me a few hours before by the smoky glare of the torch. While we were laboring forward to clear the deck, Doris and Celeste

evidently had also been diligently employed, and with womanly intuition had given to the desolate interior a home-like touch which was irresistible. I could only come to a pause — gazing about and wondering if we could really be afloat upon a century-old wreck, tossed helplessly on the waters of the Polar Sea. The odd, old-fashioned swinging lantern threw violet-hued rays over the snug scene, while in the centre the table, covered by a spotless cloth, was fairly glistening in a brilliant display of ancient silver, newly polished, and of decorated glass. Doris, who had been engaged in giving the arrangement some final deft touches, turned instantly at the sound of our entrance, her sweet face brightening with interest as she read the amazement pictured in my eyes.

"You have actually worked a marvel!" I exclaimed admiringly. "Where in the world did you unearth such a display?"

"From a locker behind the steward's pantry," she replied smilingly. "But, oh," with a shiver, "it was most bitterly cold in there when we first opened the door. I actually had to wait half an hour before venturing in. Yet you should have seen what we found; this is not half — the silver service was simply magnificent; and see — every piece is beautifully engraven with a facsimile of the ship, and a masterpiece of art."

I gazed at the bit of plate handed me, weighing it in my hand, and studying the decidedly elaborate scroll.

"I have read that these old galleons were often furnished regardless of expense," I said, "and the Dons were high livers. Did you make any other discoveries?"

"Only several cases of liquor, but all were frozen

solid. The lazarette opens from the pantry, and we succeeded in lifting the trap-door, but the cold of the air which came up was so intense that we were compelled to drop it again immediately. I never imagined such an atmosphere possible."

"It is the breath of one hundred and twenty-six years of polar winter," I explained. "This very cabin was of that same temperature when we first broke through its ice covering."

She pressed her palms to her temples, staring about her at the gray, gold-decorated interior.

"Do you actually mean to tell me that — that this wreck has been drifting and tossing about all that time?" she questioned unbelievingly.

"No, not drifting and tossing about, but solidly imbedded within the ice far south of this. This vessel is the *Donna Isabel* — the same one Tuttle saw — and her log-book lies in that farthest state-room yonder. Its last entry was made in September, 1753."

She sank down upon the bench, her eyes upon my face, and I heard her lips repeating softly, "September, 1753, September, 1753," as though the conception could hardly find acceptance in her mind. The men were grouped close beside the entrance, while De Nova and Celeste had gone forward to assist Dade in bringing his supper from the galley, so that for the moment we were comparatively alone. As I bent over, wondering what I had best say, she questioned quickly, with a little sharp indrawing of the breath:

"And — and the people, Jack, — the — the crew? What became of them?"

"Dead more than a century ago," I answered solemnly. "I did not stop this morning to read the log, and so I know little of their story. But the vessel itself tells of storm and of long struggle in the ice; probably most of those on board perished from exposure and cold."

Her hands clasped mine, her cheeks white from apprehension.

"Were — were there any — any bodies — here?"

"Yes," I replied reluctantly, not daring to say otherwise.

"How — how many?"

"Four men, a woman, and a child."

An instant she stared into my face; then swept her eyes about the lighted cabin, only to bury them within her hands, her whole body trembling.

"A — a woman and child! Here! here! for one hundred and twenty-six years! Oh, merciful God!" she lifted her eyes again, filled with horror, her hands clenched. "They — they were actually here, appearing natural? looking as they did in life?"

"Yes; they seemed to be sleeping, for they had been solidly frozen in the very attitudes in which they died. The woman rested on the couch yonder. She had beautiful dark hair and eyes, and must have been about thirty years of age. The child was in a bunk, a little flaxen-haired girl of three or four."

"And — and you buried them?"

"As best we could. We wrapped them in blankets, and consigned them to the deep, with a prayer for their souls." I bent closer. "Doris, dear, don't let this rest

so heavily upon you. I wish I might have kept it all hidden. It was only the end of one of the innumerable tragedies of the sea. We must face our own needs now, and that task will require all our courage."

I thought she did not hear me, the tears continuing to fall between her fingers, half-suppressed sobs shaking her form. Yet as I rested my hand upon her shoulder, she looked up at me out of moistened eyes, her lips firmly set.

"Yes — yes; I know, Jack, but — but it is all so terrible, and — and has come to me with such a shock. I can not comprehend it — that they should have actually been here — here, all those years — waiting! But I will not think of it any longer; I — I will do something to make me forget."

We all messed together, sitting upon the long benches drawn up about the table, Dade waiting upon us, with Doris and Celeste occupying places between De Nova and myself. At the beginning we spoke little, the strangeness of our surroundings holding us silent, but the minds of all being busy with the same thought, we insensibly drifted into conversation regarding our chances of rescue, and the history of the old vessel in whose cabin we floated. Once De Nova introduced the subject of the treasure which might be stored away below deck, and the men exhibited their interest by numerous questions; but I gave them little encouragement along this line, realizing that for the present our earliest effort should be to transform the wreck into some degree of safety — a sail first, and a clean rudder; these attained, the search for treasure might begin.

What a scene and group that was! — the wintry night

without, the drifting fog of snow, the helpless hulk rising and falling upon the treacherous heave of the sea, that odd, violet-colored light gleaming over us. The faces are even before me — the girlish looking Celeste, with her dark curls and white teeth; Lady Darlington, her gray eyes still moist as she glanced about the interior, unforgetful of its memories; De Nova, jaunty as ever, with no thought beyond the present, recalling to my mind with every movement the face of that dead Spaniard who for more than a century had sat where he was sitting; Sanchez, pale and with that hunted look, a counterpart no doubt of some seaman this ship had known in other days; McKnight, burly and red-necked; Kelly, his blue eyes filled with the merriment of Old Ireland; Johnson, broad-shouldered, and sober-faced, eating steadily, with never a lift of his shaggy brows; and Dade, fluttering about like a waiter ashore, with his eternal smirking and suggestion of a tip.

When the dishes had finally been removed I gave the men permission to smoke, went back to the after state-room, and brought forth the log-book, which we made an effort to decipher. It was roughly written and by a number of different hands, and between us our knowledge of early Spanish script was barely sufficient to enable us to read a portion of it. The earlier entries made by the captain, although badly faded, were legible enough, bringing the story of the voyage down to the latter part of July, and recounting a series of severe gales, involving the loss of several members of the crew. Then a new hand took up the pen, "Balaza, First Officer," the captain having been killed by a falling spar; for a week

or ten days the tale was of fierce struggles in the ice-pack, and a steady drift to the southward. Others followed — "Alcassar, Second Officer," "Salvatore, Government Agent," every line the record of new disaster, gales, wrecked rigging, and death. They were locked in beyond all hope early in August, vast hummocks overhanging the deck, the forecastle sealed by ice, the cold so deadly the red-hot stove scarcely kept the numbing chill from the cabin, the doors and windows of which they had covered with blankets. Not a day passed but that they carried out their dead upon the ice, leaving them beyond sight of the deck. The names were all written down. There came a time when the survivors were too few and weak even for that service; when they could do nothing but cower within the cabin and cast dice to settle on who should go down into the icy hold and bring up the fuel which alone kept life in them. They drank and played cards; they quarrelled, forgetting everything human and reverting to brutes. The child of Señora Alcatras died; the next day the mother went quietly to sleep, never to wake again. They did not even know when her final breath came. She was the last of the women. The boatswain, Pedro Reo, passed away that same night, sitting on the deck; and there was left only Salvatore, who had gone mad, a seaman named Juan Ruiz, and a passenger, Antonio Saltere. It was the latter who wrote the final entry, September 11, 1753, "*I touched Ruiz just now, he was stone cold; there is only Salvatore left, grinning at me across the table; the last candle is going out, too, and I have n't strength to go after more. Jesu, mercy.*" It ended in the blank page.

I straightened up, unable to articulate, scarcely able to see. Celeste clung convulsively to De Nova's sleeve, her eyes staring at me, her lips parted as if for a scream; Doris had bowed her face upon the table; the men sat horrified, breathing heavily. So intense was the silence that I could hear the crackling of the coal, the sharp swish of snow against the window. And that, that awful thing had actually happened here, here where we were sitting! Here, in pitiless darkness, those last two lives had gone out to meet their God — despairing, hopeless! I struggled to win back my courage, my wavering manhood, fully conscious of the benumbing fear, the voiceless horror, which had smitten us all. How could I best arouse, strengthen, reanimate them to the duty of life? Scarcely realizing what I did, I bent low over Lady Darlington.

"Doris, sweetheart," I whispered, my words barely audible to her alone, "this will drive us all mad unless we can do something to bring back faith and hope. I beg of you to sing to us, sing to us here."

She looked up, white-faced, wet-eyed, her hands trembling violently as they touched mine.

"Oh, I could not, I could not; the words would choke me."

She arose unsteadily to her feet, gripping the table, then the back of the bench, and thus helped, staggered, rather than walked, forward. A long, breathless moment she stood, grasping the window-casing, staring blindly out into the dark, the snow flecking the glass, her shoulders bent and trembling. She turned slowly, ashen-lipped, one hand shadowing her eyes. Twice she

endeavored vainly to find voice; then, clear, yet with the glistening of tears clinging to each word, she sang:

"Jesus, Saviour, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock, and treacherous shoal,
Chart and compass come from Thee;
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me."

While I live may I remember the wondrous change in her face as she sang — the effect pictured in those faces watching her.

"As a mother stills her child,
Thou canst hush the ocean wild;
Boisterous waves obey Thy will,
When Thou sayest to them, 'Be still,'
Wondrous Sovereign of the Sea,
Jesus, Saviour, pilot me."

She straightened, her fine eyes darkening, and I noticed Johnson leaning forward, clenching the table with his hard hands.

"When at last I near the shore,
And the fearful breakers roar
'Twixt me and the peaceful rest,
Then, while leaning on Thy breast,
May I hear Thee say to me,
'Fear not, I will pilot thee.'"

In the intense silence that followed she crossed to where I sat, placed one hand upon my shoulder, and bent down until her cheek pressed my sleeve. One by one the men filed gravely out into the darkness of the deck, leaving us there alone.

CHAPTER XXIX

IN WHICH WE SURVIVE A STORM

WE kept careful watch throughout the night, but the hours passed quietly, the breeze holding steady, and the crippled galleon continuing to drift toward the northeast. The fall of snow ceased soon after midnight, and the men on watch occupied themselves cleaning the deck of its accumulation, so that when all hands were called for the day's labor, the space between cabin and foremast was fairly open once more.

There is little need of my describing in detail the work done during the next three days. The weather greatly favored us, although we were quite roughly handled during most of the second day, and at one time we had the long-boat ready for launching, the *Donna Isabel* rolling most dangerously in the trough of the heavy sea, as we had not the slightest control over her. Yet we clung to the slippery decks and worked rapidly, accomplishing much considering the smallness of our company and the poor condition of the materials we found. I put De Nova in charge forward, with Sanchez, Johnson, Cole, and Dade to assist him. The women begged to be given charge of the galley, thus furnishing us with an additional hand on deck. This party cleared away much of the tangle about the foremast, flinging the

most of it overboard as valueless, yet discovering two or three spars and a considerable quantity of cordage that remained serviceable. Steps were chipped out in the mountain of ice overtopping the sealed forecastle, and running-rigging finally stretched between the top of the splintered foremast and what remained of the jutting bowsprit. This was a dangerous job, but was accomplished without serious accident.

A block and tackle, operating an ingeniously constructed pair of shears, the invention of De Nova, enabled all hands to tail on and, after some immensely hard labor, to elevate and secure a sufficiently heavy spar at the top of the splintered mast. Unable to discover any carpenter's tool-chest on board, we were driven to many expedients how best to make fast, succeeding after a fashion, but with no confidence that our lashing would withstand any severe strain. What strips of canvas we found were for the most part rotten; yet we managed with patience to piece out sections which had been preserved by the ice-coating, strengthening these by use of the long-boat's sails, and thus constructed a fairly serviceable jib. We patched together the remainder into a rather remarkable foresail, which was fastened at the bottom to deck-rings. It could thus be handled readily, though we realized that the first severe puff of air would be likely to reduce it to ribbons.

Easily as these efforts are now recounted, they represented time, thought, and an immense amount of labor, besides involving no little danger. The icy decks, the rotten cordage, the crazy pitching of the sodden hulk underfoot,—all combined to add to the peril. In the

meanwhile McKnight, Kelly, and myself were equally busy aft. The two former were lowered from the after-ports of the cabin, and began hacking away with knife and cleaver at the thick mass of ice fouling the rudder. They were two days at it before the huge wooden contrivance worked at all freely in its grooves, and then were obliged to patch and tinker at the blade. This was cracked badly, the outer section entirely broken off, but McKnight managed to bind all that remained firmly into place, going down twice entirely under water, and coming back on board sheeted with ice. The wheel had been carried away bodily and the stanchions ripped out of the deck, and so we were compelled to rig up an improvised tiller, operating it by means of block and tackle.

When we finally had all these matters completed, the ancient craft certainly presented a sight for gods and men. However, she sailed, proving slowly obedient to her creaking helm, and leaving a broad, oily wake stretching away astern. Gathered in a group, abaft the galley, we gave vent to an exultant cheer, as the blunt bows began ploughing the surges, pointing resolutely to the northward, the old canvas, dirty, patched, ragged, and disreputable, puffing out bravely before the pressure of the wind. The old tub wallowed fearfully, the icy water slapping the wide deck amidships, even keeping the galley well awash, the load of ice forward dragging her down by the head. Nevertheless she made better progress than I had supposed possible from her shape and rig, both De Nova and I figuring it at about five knots to the hour, the pressure of waves astern being no slight

impetus. In one of the cabins I discovered a quadrant — the old fashioned "half-circle" — and, although it was an awkward instrument, I made the best use of it possible, figuring out an observation by the time of my watch, deciding that we were not far away from longitude 110° 15′ West and latitude 54° 30′ South, on the edge of the ice-drift, and about ten hundred miles from the South American coast. Lord! but it looked like a long voyage; besides, I had little faith in the correctness of my reckoning.

As the weather turned out it proved that we were not an hour too soon with our preparations. Midnight found all hands on deck, the split foresail being lowered with a rush, and three men struggling desperately to control the unwieldy tiller. We held to the jib to help steady her, trusting that stronger canvas might hold, but the boarding waves drenched everything fore and aft, a perfect cataract of water pouring over the ice hummock topping the topgallant-forecastle, and much of it draining down through the great hole which had been ripped in the deck by the fall of the mainmast. It was an ugly sea, the wind, coming in gusts, seeming to strike us from different quarters, the sky above a dense mass of rolling vapor. As dawn came reluctantly, I think I never beheld a wilder scene, the cloud-masses a vivid green, the whole surface of the sea boiling and white with foam.

The *Donna Isabel* staggered through the smother in a sodden way which made me heartsick, totally unable to rise with the swell, and ploughing bows under, her huge stern sticking up like a cliff, the salt crests fairly lapping

the bulwarks amidships, the flying spray lashing our faces. It was cold, too, the wind stinging, the drops of water turning to ice the instant they touched the deck. The sense of danger and of imprisonment drove both women to desert the cabin, and most of us huddled under the overhang of the poop, staring forth into the smother, helpless to avert disaster, and expecting every moment that the straining, moaning hull under us would take its final plunge. There must have been good shipwrights in those days from the way that laboring hulk held together, groaning in agony, smitten by the trip-hammers of the sea. I could hear, as she rolled, the swashing of water in the hold, where, I already felt convinced, there lay a solid foundation of ice extending from side to side. It was this immense load that weighted the ship so heavily, holding her dead and inert in the water —an ice cargo she had brought with her from the regions of the Pole.

Clinging tightly to her arm to keep her from being flung to the deck by the mad antics of the vessel, and peering through the mist of salt spray obscuring everything forward, I turned and gazed into Doris's eyes, beneath the shadow of her hood. They were devoid of fear, instantly smiling back at my anxiety.

"Girl," I said, unable to understand, "are you never frightened?"

"Not here or now," were the words blown to me on the gale. "Why should I be, Jack? It is only what must come to us. Either to-day or to-morrow will be the end of all our struggle. You know, fully as well as I, how perfectly helpless our position is. This miser-

able wreck yields temporary shelter, but nothing more. We can no more hope to sail it across those leagues than we could the long-boat. I have no thought of rescue; if I had I could never have confessed I loved you, — could never have permitted those about us even to guess the truth."

I turned her face toward me, forgetful of the storm in the bitter sting of these words.

"Do you truly mean all that, Doris? Do you mean that if, by some wondrous miracle of God's mercy, we are finally preserved, you would leave me? would crucify your love for a conventionality of society? would blot out from your heart all remembrance of what has already occurred between us during these days of danger?"

"No, I would not blot it out; that would be impossible. It would remain, the sweetest memory of life; but — but I would do what I hold to be right; I — I would go back to my husband, unstained even by your touch."

"Doris!"

"Yes; I know all you would say. It is true that my heart would not be there, but my duty would. I see this as a woman, from a woman's point of view. Neither with you nor him could I hope to find happiness; yet to do that which is right must surely bring greater contentment than a weak surrender to wrong. It is not so much what the world might say, as the verdict of my own conscience. I love you, sweetheart, now and forever; here, alone, realizing the certainty of death, my confession can do no possible evil to any one; but yonder in the world it would mean broken vows and the

loss of my own respect, as well as of yours. Am I not right?"

I did not answer, unable to say either yes or no. She drew closer to me, both hands clasping my arm, her eyes uplifted.

"I am so glad you did not insist that love would excuse all," she continued pleadingly. "It does not; it can not. It can never make wrong right; it might veneer it over for a time with pleasure. It might cause one to forget; but the conscience lives, and the day of awakening comes. Surely, you do not ask of me an illicit love?"

"No, no; only you were trapped into this marriage; it possesses no sanction truly divine."

"True, Jack, but it exists nevertheless, acknowledged before the world. The laws of England do not grant divorce under any such plea, even if I were to consent to the degradation of seeking one. Yet why should we talk of this here and now? Every plunge of this laboring hulk under us feels as if it would be the last. Let us accept what is ours while we remain together; let me love you without thought, without fear."

"Doris," I managed to articulate after a struggle to control myself, "you would pluck the heart out of any man in such a situation as this. Do you wish me to cease struggling, to remain inert, nerveless, — to give up everything? weakly to permit all on board to go down without even a battle for life? I refuse to be that sort of coward. Deny me everything, if you will, every reward, yet I am going to contend for our rescue to the very end. I have not given up, and I do not propose

to give up. I believe God helps those who help themselves. The sea has been cheated of its victims before now, and brave hearts work miracles. I do not presume to say that your decision is either right or wrong. I am not your conscience, nor would I bring you a moment's unhappiness, but I should despise myself forever if I deserted or played the coward now. So long as a plank holds I 'll keep up the battle for your life, my girl — ay! even if at the end I am compelled to yield you up to one whose only claim is a legal ceremony."

Her eyes burned dark, filled with tenderness.

"The pledge of a man, Jack, and I give it back with the heart of a woman."

"Then tell me the one thing that will keep me strong."

"What is it?"

"That here, or elsewhere, alone on this sea or with him in England, you will still love me."

"Everywhere, always. I have only one heart, and I have given that to you forever."

Firmly, honestly, as she spoke these words, the light in her eyes told even more clearly her loyalty. She might return to her slavery, actuated by a feeling of duty I was utterly unable to appreciate, but never again could I feel the slightest doubt of her, or the slightest envy of him. We remained there in comparative silence, gazing forth on what little we could perceive of the wild scene, content to feel each other's near presence, neither of us expecting any long lease of life. It seemed impossible that the helpless, straining wreck should survive such a buffeting of wind and wave; yet the jib held, and our

improvised steering-gear kept some slight control over the rudder. Little by little my faith began to revive in the buoyancy of the hull underneath, and finally I persuaded the drenched, half-frozen women to retreat within the shelter of the cabin out of the sweep of that piercing wind, while I took my share of duty at the straining tiller.

We discussed it all later while thawing out our frozen clothing around the cabin stove, the waves still running high, though the fierce vortex of the storm had passed away, and no man among us could explain how we had ever lived through those hours. The galley was broken into kindling, the litter forward had been ripped from out its ice-bed and swept aft, strewing the deck; the remaining steps leading to the poop were smashed flat, and the tossing wreck listed so horribly to port that the seas rolled unchecked through the gap in the bulwarks. Yet we slept, utterly worn out with fatigue, and when we awoke again ran up once more our rotten foresail, flung the broken lumber overboard, and, like sailors, resumed the desperate fight for life.

CHAPTER XXX

IN WHICH WE FIND TREASURE

AY, more; we even began to dream of treasure as soon as the fierce winds ceased and the waves fell. The lust for wealth, partially blunted by the requirements of hardship and peril, revived within us the instant nature granted a temporary respite. The memory of the three million *pesos* that might be stowed away below began to haunt our imaginations, and the story of it found utterance on our lips. The negro blurted it forth first, his eyes rolling, and De Nova came direct to me, asking, in behalf of the men, the privilege of making search. There was no excuse for refusal, even had I desired to find one, as the decks were cleared of the debris left by the storm, and the *Donna Isabel* rode her course easily to a lashed helm. Leaving Dade above to keep a watchful eye on the weather, I willingly led the others into the steward's pantry, where we pried open the door leading down into the lazarette.

That same intense cold of the Antarctic smote us the moment the creaking hinges yielded, and we stood peering down through the aperture. We waited impatiently for the first frigid breath to escape, huddled about the stove in the cabin, and recalling various sea tales of treasure seeking, which only served to whet our appetite

for the coming adventure. I often think of that scene — the rough, hairy faces, the excited voices, the evidences of nervous expectancy; some sitting on benches, others lounging upon the deck in true democratic equality, with Lady Darlington and Celeste hovering just beyond our ring, their background the gleaming arm-rack, their faces exhibiting their interest in our wild sea-yarns. Now and then I lifted my eyes, meeting Doris's questioning glance, and assured that I understood her mood.

At last, but well wrapped in our mufflers and bearing a candle aloft to cast its flickering yellow light through the pitchy darkness, we ventured below, scrambling down the short ladder. Cole held the glim, his black face shining, the whites of his eyes conspicuous as he stared eagerly about. We found innumerable boxes and barrels, crates, bottles, and wicker flasks, some open, the packing straw strewn about, others tightly nailed, piled everywhere, evidence that the galleon had been amply provisioned for a long voyage, and that her crew had never perished of starvation. It had been the cold, the loneliness, the awful agony of their hopeless condition that had left the *Donna Isabel* a charnel ship. We handled this collection rapidly, contenting ourselves with merely testing the weight of each package, quickly convinced that none was heavy enough to conceal precious metal. This job must have occupied more than an hour, handicapped as we were by the poor light, and several times I glanced through the open trap overhead to observe the faces of the women framed there as they watched us silently. Once Dade stared down, bringing word the sky was thickening in the west, and lingering

to observe our operations until I had to order him back upon deck.

A solid, nail-studded, oaken door appeared in the forward bulkhead, and so soon as we had succeeded in handling every article stored within the lazarette, I had a passage cleared to it, the men working with feverish impatience. Indeed, outside of our enthusiasm, the cold remained so intense that we were all glad to labor to keep the blood circulating, the men's breath forming in icicles about their mouths. When finally reached, the door was locked and seemingly as solid as the bulkhead itself, nor did a search of the after state-rooms reveal any keys. No doubt they were in Salvatore's pocket, many a league astern, but Kelly and McKnight brought down the cleaver and an iron bar, and proceeded to burst it open, the rest of us crowding about, too cold and excited to keep still, but very confident the treasure awaited us within. My own heart beat fiercely with anticipation, and I heard De Nova swearing in French, quite unable to control himself. It seemed to me that door never would yield; but at last Johnson managed to get a purchase low down, and, with Cole heaving at his side, they fairly tore the wood asunder. Through the considerable opening thus made there burst a torrent of icy water into our very faces, extinguishing the light, and sending us stumbling backward to the ladder, up which we swarmed almost in panic. Anything unexpected in that ghost-ship made cowards of us all, and we fought our way forth into the daylight in a suddenness of terror almost ludicrous, swearing and clawing at each other like madmen.

It required another hour for the deluge of water to drain away through the deck, after which we ventured below again, the relighted candle revealing slush-ice everywhere, with a considerable trickle still gurgling through the hole in the door. However, we had an opening to work at, and soon succeeded in tearing most of the obstruction away piecemeal, only to be confronted by a solid barrier of glittering ice fully five feet thick, leaving a space at the top of the door barely sufficient for a man's body to pass through. De Nova, cursing as if he had gone crazy, hoisted me to the top of it, where I clung precariously, holding the sputtering candle aloft, and peering about over the gleaming surface and through into the black shadows. Good Lord, but it was cold, repellent, frightful! The beams supporting the deck, huge, black timbers, were within easy reach of my hand, and forward the spectral glow of daylight streamed in through the rift in the deck-planks above. But from one bulging side to the other extended this solid mass of ice, the congealed draining of a century of waves that had dashed their salt spray down the opening ripped by the wrecked mainmast. No wonder the old hulk hung sodden with all that load below! No wonder she rode like a rock with those tons upon tons of ice weighing and dragging her remorselessly down!

I crawled forward as far as the slivery butt of the mainmast whence I could look up through the splintered deck to the narrow strip of sky overhead. There was a bulkhead forward, but the ice extended solidly to the wood. I could hear the ceaseless swell of the sea pounding against the sides, the groaning of timbers, the

flapping of the jib's canvas, and realized more than ever before the sickening, sodden roll of the laden hull. The level surface of the ice told plainly enough its story of formation; when all that water came through, the vessel had been upon an even keel, imbedded firmly, no doubt, in the ice-pack. I crept back as cautiously as I had advanced, the rolling of the wreck rendering the slippery surface dangerous to travel over. The men watched me anxiously as I slid down into the lazarette.

"What did you find, sir?"

"Nothing except ice, solid clear to the forward bulkhead. It looks as though we had reached the end of our treasure-hunt, my lads."

There was a sullen growl of profanity, McKnight viciously slashing at the ice-front with his cleaver. Twice he struck, with no other object except the venting of his ungovernable anger, his forehead beaded, the great muscles of his arms standing out like whip-cords. A considerable chunk scaled off, falling thumping to the deck, and causing him to spring backward to escape injury. As if maddened by this, he drove in the blade of the axe again — it clanged against metal! We all heard it; we all witnessed the rebound.

"By God, mates, there's one of 'em, anyhow!" roared a voice, hoarse from exploding excitement. But I was already upon my knees, feeling blindly into the ice cavity.

They came howling about me like so many wolves, eager to see with their own eyes, but I crowded them back, snatching the candle from De Nova's fingers and throwing the flickering light down level with the deck.

"It's a brass-bound chest, men," I cried, straightening up and facing them. "But it is going to require some hard digging to get it out. About all I can see is the handle of it."

I never comprehended before how the passion and lust for gold can express itself upon men's faces. Tense, motionless, breathing heavily, their features drawn, their eyes gleaming feverishly in the yellow flame, they stared at me and then at that ice-front, demented and speechless. No one thought of where we were — castaways, our lives the sport of winds and waves, a sodden wreck under us, our nearest port a thousand miles away across a stormy sea; all we realized at that moment was that there, just before us, under that mantle of ice, lay buried *three million pesos.* God! the collar of my jacket seemed choking me; I breathed as if a man's fingers clutched my throat, and I saw McKnight's burly form shaking as if he had an ague fit. *Three million pesos!* The hot blood rushed to my head, a lava stream, and De Nova's face, white as chalk behind his little black moustaches, seemed dancing before me ghostlike. Damn him! the fellow made me think of Salvatore, the man who, just above, frozen and dead, had guarded this treasure for one hundred and twenty-six years. I cast the suggestion aside with a curse and a laugh, grasping Kelly by the shoulder to steady myself, — to realize these were real men, this task before us real work. It was like coming forth from under an anæsthetic, leaving me weak as a child, yet with brain clear and faculties aroused to action. Johnson thrust forward the cleaver.

"Let me get in there, sir; I 'm the man for a cuttin' job."

I stepped aside, and the broad blade fell slashing against the front of the ice.

"Only two of you men can work here at once," I put in hastily. "Hold on, Johnson, until we get this ship-shape. An axeman, with a helper to haul back the ice out of the way, is all we need. Any more would only be in the way; besides, some of us ought to be on deck. It is going to require hours, maybe days, to get that chest out, and meanwhile we must sail this vessel and keep her right side up. The thing to do is to arrange relays, and keep at it steady. Johnson, you and Kelly go to work first. The rest of us will climb up into the cabin, and figure it out."

They went along with me up the ladder as though they were prisoners, casting last lingering glances below, where the weird flame of the candle flickered yellow, the blows of the cleaver echoing sharply as they clustered about the stove, welcoming the warmth of it. It had been frigid below decks, although we had been scarcely conscious of it in our excitement. But now we stood shivering, gazing into each others' faces and actually afraid to talk lest the whole occurrence should prove a dream from which a chance word might awaken us. *Three million pesos* — here, actually here; almost within reach of our hands; they were digging for them just below; even then, in the silence, we could hear the faint echo of blows being struck against the ice. *Three million pesos!* — and it was all ours, our very own, — to divide, to spend, to do with exactly as we

pleased. We had dreamed about all this before, on the decks of the ill-fated *Sea Queen*, but now we sought to grasp it as an actual existing fact, and our minds seemed paralyzed by the knowledge. I even forgot that Doris was present until she touched me gently on the shoulder, and I looked down into her questioning eyes. How deep, quiet, unagitated they were; in some way all this excitement had not touched her, and the calmness of her face, the faint smiling of her lips, left me in wonderment.

"Do you not know what we have just discovered below?" I asked, still tingling to the marvel of it. "The treasure, the Spanish treasure!"

"Oh, yes," but the soft voice seemed tinged with sadness. "Yet it does not greatly interest me. Money seems so little here, so utterly valueless."

The simple words, the tone of their utterance brought me to myself as though I had received an electric shock. She was still smiling, yet all at once I noticed how white her face was, how dark the shadows beneath her eyes. The lure of the gold vanished from my mind, as if some wizard's wand had waved it away. I thought of the treacherous sea without, the life and death struggle before us, those dreary leagues separating us from hope. My hands clasped hers, the expression of love in my eyes brightening her face instantly.

"That is so much better, Jack," she said tenderly. "I knew it was only the madness of a moment which caused you to forget. Come out on deck with me until you lose all memory of it — until I bring you back to real life again."

"I do not need it, sweetheart," and I bent low, looking into her eyes. "The fever has left my blood. I hardly know how it ever laid such hold upon me, but the thought of all that wealth below drove me as mad as the others. You see how much I need you."

"Oh, no; you would have recovered without my help, although it might have required more time to complete a cure. But I fear there is no hope for the men."

"I certainly shall not spare you to minister to them." She laughed, her happiness of disposition returning.

"That would be useless; they are of different stamp. The fever for sudden wealth is in the blood of all of us. See how excited Celeste is. Perhaps if I had ever experienced poverty I might be crazed also. But it is so foolish here — *here*," and she swept her hands about in comprehensive gesture, "when we know it can be ours only for a day, or at most a week."

"But we have not given up hope," I protested. "Why should we? The *Donna Isabel* has already weathered one storm, and seems stanch beneath us."

"Even in case of that miracle I want nothing to do with this treasure," she said gravely. "It seems to me, Jack, there must be a curse upon that gold below. It will never do good to any human being. It was stolen by the sword, won for Spain by the shedding of blood, and has since cursed this ship and all who sailed in her. The living and the dead guarded it, and now we have come into its evil clutch. It is not superstition but faith which makes me say this — the *Donna Isabel* will never make port; that gold below will never do a soul on board

anything but harm. I wish it could be left where it is, buried in the ice."

"At such a suggestion the men would mutiny."

"I suppose so," she acknowledged sadly, "and the end will be the same in either case. But I want you to be different. Let them build their air castles; but do you come out on deck with me, where the sea and sky will give us other thoughts."

Comprehending only vaguely what she meant, yet beneath the witching spell of her presence I went gladly enough, forgetting utterly that useless treasure imbedded in the ice below.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN WHICH THE TREASURE CAUSES TROUBLE

BUT the men did not forget, or cease in their eager efforts to rescue that frozen gold from the grasp of the ice. By this time, thoroughly convinced myself that our final preservation of this wealth would prove impossible, I was still far from devoid of interest in its recovery, and consequently made no effort to interrupt the work being carried on between decks. It was better that the men be busy and their minds occupied than to have them roaming aimlessly about the decks in discontent, now that the ship and weather gave us little occasion for concern. Hence they vigorously plied the cleaver, working in relays of two hours each, during the remainder of the day and night. After breakfast had been served we all of us went below to unite our strength in hauling forth the loosened box from the ice cavity.

We accomplished this by resorting to block and tackle, and even then experienced no small difficulty in dragging it away from the ice grip. Under the dim candlelight it appeared a fair-sized sea-chest, constructed of some heavy, dark wood, and bound securely by metal bands, with a cumbersome lock. A considerable quantity of water from somewhere continued to seep down into the lazarette, making the floor an icy puddle, and so we tailed on to the ropes again, and hoisted the chest up

through the trap-door out upon the cabin deck. I could find no keys in any of the state-rooms, and we must have been half an hour breaking the rusty lock and prying open the lid, the only sounds audible the blows struck and the heavy breathing of the men. Finally we wrenched apart the last band, and our eager eyes beheld the revealed contents — pieces-of-eight, yellow and level to the top! There was a wild yell, a fierce scramble, the crazed men digging their fingers into the coins, handling them, fondling them, laughing and crying like children in their excitement, and cursing each other as they struggled for a chance at the box. For the moment, staring down at the dull glow of metal, I even lost control of myself, scarcely aware of the mad uproar. It was actually *there* — there before me! That old Spanish record had all been true; here, and beneath that ice between decks lay the remainder — *three million pesos!* Here was the wealth of a king; here, almost within reach of our hands, and it was all *ours* — ours, if we could only bring it forth to where it possessed value.

If we only could! The thought struck me like a blow. I knew the truth, the truth. There was not one chance in a thousand — not one. I made no effort to deceive myself. Two days before I might have yielded to this mad delusion, but not then. The memory of that last storm remained too vivid, the wreck resulting from it too apparent. The men, even the mate, blinded by the gold-lust had ignored facts plain as day to me, — the terrible listing of the ship to port, the constant seeping of water into the hold, the increasing soddenness of the staggering hull, — all these combined to tell the story — that

the *Donna Isabel* was doomed. No power of men, situated as we were, could ever save her. The protecting ice-sheath, by help of which she had drifted ghost-like out of the Antarctic, pounded by the fierce seas, loosened by the milder air of more northern latitudes, had already commenced to flake off, and the invading water was discovering crevices everywhere along her ancient seams. We had come to the gold; we had discovered it; it was ours. But we could only gaze on it, and give it back to the ocean in exchange for our lives. I straightened up, my lips compressed, and looked beyond the struggling figures of the men into Doris's questioning gray eyes. Father of Mercy, I possessed something worth more than money — the love of a woman! Ay, but what of the men? What of the men? It would be cutting their hearts out; yet it must be done — done, if necessary, with all the brutality of a slave driver. She had said this treasure was a curse, a legacy of crime and death, a prize for dead men. Not while I retained mind and body to battle should it cost our lives. I pushed De Nova backward, and planted myself across the open chest, scowling into the uplifted, angry faces.

"That's enough, men. This is part of the treasure all right, but there is no occasion for you to go crazy over it. Put those coins back — do you hear, McKnight? — put them back, and we'll shut down the lid. They're nice to look at, and dream over, but that's about all the good we'll ever get out of them. Were there any signs of others down there in the ice, Johnson?"

"No, sir, but they'll be there."

"Oh, yes, no doubt they'll be there, but the only way

we could ever get them out would be to run this hooker ashore in some mild climate and let the ice melt. It's plain enough to see what has happened. The *Donna Isabel* sailed in ballast, these chests being about the only cargo she carried. They shifted in the heavy seas, and the Lord only knows where they are now. Anyway, they are safe beyond the reach of your ice cleaver."

They stared into each others' faces, the disagreeable truth slowly penetrating their minds. Kelly spoke, his voice trembling:

"Then why the hell, sir, could n't we do just what you said?"

"What! run her ashore? — simply because, my lad, that shore happens to be a thousand miles away, and I doubt if this wreck keeps afloat three days longer."

Their excited faces told of incredulity, of a suspicion that I was playing with them, and I went on swiftly:

"You fellows have been so crazy the last two days you have n't thought of anything but gold. I tell you it is not the treasure, but our lives we've got to save. The ice is peeling off the sides, and the ship is taking water like a sieve. We are going to be driven back to the long-boat, and how much of this heavy stuff can we transport in her? I know it's mighty tough, lads, but we might as well face things as they are."

I expected opposition, but not such a wild storm of curses and execrations as greeted these words. All sense of sea discipline vanished, even De Nova joining in the outcry. I remained, planted across the box, waiting for the bedlam to cease, uncertain how I had best attempt to restore them to their senses. Cole decided the matter

by rushing forward like an enraged bull, throwing me aside with a heave of his shoulder, the next instant burying his hands in the coins. That the fellow was out of his head was evident enough, — mad as a March hare, — but I could not hesitate because of that. Those others were on the verge; all they needed for open revolt was leadership, example, and I caught up a chair and laid the blubbering negro on the deck, pieces-of-eight flying in every direction as he fell.

"Unless it's a fight you want, stand back, the whole of you!" I threatened, the broken chair still in my hands. "We may be able to take this chest, or a part of it, with us, but there is going to be no more digging done down below. De Nova, who are you with in this row, — the men or me?"

"By gar, it make me mad to give up all zat monies."

"Well, get mad! you'll have to give it up just the same. Don't be a fool, man. You can see this for yourself; you're a sailor; it would require a year to tunnel through that ice with the tools we've got, and look at the hull under us. Why, you can see the list of the deck even here in the cabin, and the feel of her when she drops into a hollow is enough to make a seaman sick. Which is worth most, mate, those yellow boys or the little girl yonder?"

He looked at Celeste, white-faced, the tears staining her cheeks, her eyes glowing like two coals, and all the fierce passion of resistance seemed to desert his countenance. His glance dropped to the deck, returning to my face.

"By gar, if you put it zat way, monsieur, zen I choose the lady, sure. But ze sing I want is both of 'em."

"*UNLESS it's fight you want, stand back, the whole of you!*"

"No doubt; but you have sense enough to realize that you can't have both. So I count you with me. Now, how about you, Johnson?"

The big, hairy seaman, sober-faced and grave-eyed, glanced about on his mates and straightened up.

"I 'm here to obey orders, sir," he said slowly. "I 've allers been poor, an' I reckon the Lord don't mean me to ever git rich."

I held out my hand, deeply touched by the sterling honesty of the reply.

"You 've got something worth more than money, Bill, and that 's manhood. You stand the acid. Shake hands, mate."

He responded awkwardly enough, having received more cuffs than praise during his rough sea life, yet the expression in the mild blue eyes gave me confidence that I had touched the right chord. I surveyed the others, — McKnight leaning on the cleaver, red-faced and scowling, Sanchez, Kelly, and Dade back of him, the negro still groaning on the deck.

"Dade, come here." The fellow shuffled over toward me, as spineless as a jelly-fish. "Now, Kelly, you and Sanchez lay Cole out in a bunk and dress his head. All he needs is a bandage and plenty of cold water. When you get done with that job come on deck and I 'll find you another. McKnight, drop that cleaver and come along with us."

They did not like it; but with De Nova, Johnson, and Dade standing behind me, they realized the uselessness of revolt. Their hesitation and growling curses irritated me none the less.

"Jump, you fellows, unless you want the same medicine Cole just took."

The two men lifted the negro in their arms and bore him back to one of the state-rooms aft. Kelly came out again and returned with a pannikin of water. I bent down and closed the lid of the chest. The five of us tramped out on deck.

It was, indeed, a rare day for that season of the year and in that ocean, the sky overhead pale blue and cloudless, the wide sea stirred merely by the gentlest swell, the slight breeze steady, and barely firm enough to hold the rotten canvas stiff. There was even sufficient heat in the sun's rays to moisten the ice along the decks where the chill of the wind did not strike, and the sweep of the horizon extended farther than we had seen for weeks. The beauty of the day would have put new heart and life into all of us but for the miserable wreck underfoot. The very glare of the sunlight seemed to reveal with new vividness how close the end was. Light as the sea ran, the ice-laden bow of the *Donna Isabel* ploughed deeply under, every crest bursting in white foam through the break in the port bulwarks, the list in the deck so steep we made our way forward with difficulty along the slippery surface. Our rate of progress had become so slow as to leave only the barest ripple in the wake. Clambering over into the fore-chains, I pointed out to the men how the sea was encroaching on the bulging side. They stared at the evidence gravely, each comprehending clearly enough the dread meaning, yet no one spoke for a minute.

"I reckon you was right, sir," admitted Johnson, finally. "The old hooker is goin' down."

De Nova peered along the slippery deck, gleaming in the sun, moodily, but said nothing until he looked up and caught my eyes.

"W'at you do, monsieur?"

"I mean to hold on as long as it is safe," I replied, "because the cabin gives shelter to the women. We all know what the open boat means, and we 'll put that off until the last possible moment. We are not making much progress, it 's true; but still, every mile helps, and, if this weather will only hold, the wreck may keep afloat for several days yet."

"It will nevaire stand anozzer blow, monsieur."

"No, nor a high sea. For that reason we 'll get everything fixed for a quick departure."

Kelly and Sanchez appeared in the cabin door, and I called them to join us.

"Now, lads, let 's make use of what daylight we 've got left. This weather is likely to change any minute. Three of you lower that jib, and get out the canvas belonging to the long-boat. Piece the jib up with any old stuff you can find that will stand a light wind. De Nova, you take charge of that job. Dade, you 'd better run back to the tiller, and hold her steady as the jib comes down. Johnson and I will see that the long-boat is sound, stocked, and ready for launching."

We made a thorough job of it, overhauling the boat from stem to stern, and ending by rigging up block and tackle for hoisting her, when loaded, over the bulwarks. We lashed the *Donna Isabel's* helm again, and despatched Dade into the cabin after supplies. The greater portion of the stores brought from the *Sea Queen*, more especially

the canned goods, remained intact, and we packed these away snugly in the stern lockers, adding whatever we could find that remained eatable among the frozen stores in the lazarette. Altogether we thus amassed a sufficient supply. We rolled up all the extra blankets, shoving them under the seats, and saw that serviceable spars and oars were safely stowed and lashed. It was growing dusk before these matters had all been attended to, and I finally stepped out of the boat. The men were massed in a body on the deck, and the moment I saw them I understood they had been discussing the situation. De Nova spoke:

"Monsieur," he questioned, "how much in American money would be in ze chest?"

"I don't know, of course, but just for a guess, perhaps a hundred thousand dollars — maybe more."

"An' zare be only ze ten of us. To divide it up make, maybe, ten t'ousand dollar for each. Was it not so?"

"Why, yes, or even more than that, for I will cheerfully waive my share, and can pledge that Lady Darlington will do the same. But what of it?"

"Zat fine lot monies for sailor-man," he said, eagerly. "An' w'y not have it? Anyhow, w'y not try to save it? Ze long-boat is built to hol' twenty-five peoples, an' we only ten. Zen w'y not take ze gol'? It eat not'ing, it drink not'ing, an' if it weigh too much, zen we t'row it overboard. But w'y not try carry it, ze hundred t'ousand dollar?"

There was no good reason why we should n't; besides, the very possibility of preserving even that share of the treasure would prove an inspiration to the men. I looked

about into their anxious faces, feeling myself some measure of their excitement.

"That will be all right, lads," I said gladly. "You've earned it fair enough, and we'll start with it anyhow. Take the stuff out of the chest and tie it up in blankets. Then we can stow it away evenly so as to keep the boat balanced. But," I added, as the memory of what Doris had said came to me, "I think it only fair to tell you that I'm sure there is bad luck in every *peso* of it."

The men gave my croaking prophecy no second thought, but went trotting aft, chattering together like a parcel of boys.

CHAPTER XXXII

IN WHICH THE DONNA ISABEL GOES DOWN

THE following night and day passed quietly enough, the weather holding clear, but with a mist slowly gathering in the South that seemed to threaten change. I observed just before sunset that this fog had so thickened and spread as to obscure nearly a third of the sky, yet there was no veering of the wind or noticeable increase in the roll of the sea. The hulk was sinking, yet so slowly that we were only certain of the fact through constant measurements and the sight of water seeping in through the numerous cracks revealed by the disappearing ice. It was a situation to get upon the nerves, yet I do not remember that it occasioned any great change in the routine of our life on board. We strengthened and patched the sails, fashioned a spare rudder for the long-boat, and Doris and Celeste discovered several valuable jewels stowed away in one of the cabin lockers.

The negro Cole acted as though he had lost his mind entirely, and after studying him awhile I concluded to let him do as he pleased. He ate breakfast with the rest of us, but without speaking, and afterward, when we left the table, picked up the cleaver and made directly for the lazarette. I called to him, but he merely rolled his eyes up at me from the blackness below and disappeared, the

icy water slushing underfoot. We soon heard him vigorously slashing away at the ice, muttering constantly to himself. I went part way down the ladder, with a candle in my hand, whence I could see him toiling away at the end of the hole the men had excavated in the ice, though he paid no attention to my call. The water was fully six inches deep over the lazarette deck, splashing back and forth as the vessel rolled, and I could see drops of seawater squeezing in through the sides of her and dripping steadily down. There was nothing to do but leave the fellow alone, so after telling Dade to look down the ladder once in a while and keep an eye on him I joined the others on deck.

"Gone clear nutty," commented McKnight, tapping his head. "The very sight o' them yellow boys was too much for him."

"I only hope it was n't my blow," I said soberly.

"Blow — hell! Why, that crack never hurt his skull, Mr. Stephens. The fellow was plumb crazy as soon as the box was open. He never thought there was so much money in the world. Why, you ought to 'a' heard him tell of the junk he was goin' to buy when he got his share back to the States. Oh, he 'll come out of his dream all right if we only let him alone for a day or so. It 's only the nigger of it."

So we left him down there alone, pegging away in the dark. He came up, however, at the call for dinner, eating away heartily without uttering a word and going back to his solitary labor, paying not the slightest heed to any of us. When night came I compelled him to remove his icy trousers and boots and lie down in one of the

bunks. When I looked in a few minutes later he was sound asleep.

That the wreck was slowly settling down under us was beyond doubt, and laden with ice as she was the sodden hull would probably drop at last like a stone. The thickening sky to the southward made me exceedingly anxious; and just before dark we talked the conditions over together, each man having his say. The decision was to remain on board, all alike believing the *Donna Isabel* would keep afloat several days yet, unless the weather became serious. Everything was made ready, however, for a hasty escape, and a deck-watch set. Kelly and I were to serve from eight until twelve, then Johnson and McKnight until four, with De Nova and Sanchez completing the round to daylight.

Doris passed the greater part of my watch on deck with me, and as Kelly was on the poop we were the nearest to being alone together we had ever been. It was an exceedingly dark night, but still, an awful sense of loneliness brooding over the black waters, the canvas forward flapping mournfully, the huge rudder continually creaking to the slap of the waves, and a faint gurgle of water sounding from below. The dreariness of it affected us both, in spite of an effort at cheerfulness; besides, we had little to talk about except our perilous situation. Yet there was an acute pleasure in thus being together, and so she lingered on beside me, her eyes wandering from my face out into the gloom, much of the time silent, yet content. Finally, after urging her to go in out of the chill, I took a turn forward, even clambering up the ice hummock to the fore-

peak, and testing the rise of water with a measuring rod. As I returned aft, where Kelly was slapping himself to keep warm, a light, flaky snow began falling and soon powdered the decks.

I did not undress, but flung myself on the couch in the main cabin after replenishing the fire, and lay there some time, staring up at the smoky deck-beams, listening to the slush of water in the lazarette, half-frightened by the soddenness of the hulk's rolling. Yet my conviction that she would keep afloat for hours yet finally lulled me to sleep.

De Nova woke me with a fierce grip on the shoulder, and I started up, noting the gray dawn on the front windows, and reading the truth in his face before he uttered a word.

"Is she going?"

"*Oui, Oui;* by gar, she sink quick!"

"Call all hands; get the boat clear and ready to swing. I'll bring the women."

The men were tumbling out as I pounded on the after state-room door. A glance through the stern-ports brought my heart into my throat, the crests of the pursuing waves were so close. Knowing that both women would be fully dressed, I flung open the door and began hastily gathering up their belongings. Within a brief minute we were outside on the deck. A single glance told us there was no time to waste. It was a gray, misty dawn, hoar-frost everywhere, the faint twinkle of stars still in the sky. The sea ran somewhat heavier, yet with a regular swell, the *Donna Isabel* reeling and staggering like a

drunken man. The vessel had sunk so deeply that her main-chains dipped, while her list permitted the water free entrance through the gap in the port bulwarks, and flooded the deck. There was a desperation to her mad wallowing which made me think each plunge would prove her last. I swung Doris into the stern of the long-boat, bidding her hold on tight.

"Now jump, men, — lively, or she'll go down under us! De Nova, Johnson, tumble in and handle the ropes; Sanchez, fend off, and have an oar ready. Now, then, tail on the rest of you, and let her go, — easy, there, easy! Slide down the line everybody, and cast off, — oars, men, oars, or she'll swamp us."

The dip of the chains missed us by the barest inch; then we swung clear, tossed high on the creamy crest of a huge roller, which enabled us to look straight down on the sloping deck.

"Is every one here?" I asked.

"All but Jem Cole, sir."

"Cole, where is he?"

It was Johnson who answered.

"Well, all I know about it is, I hauled him out o' the bunk, and shook him wide awake. Then I left him to go and rout out Kelly. That's the last I saw of him, sir, but it's a sure thing he ain't here."

De Nova had hold of the tiller, and I sprang forward, pushing past Sanchez, who was in the bow.

"Lay her nose close in where I can jump for the chains," I ordered sharply. "We can't leave Cole behind to drown."

It was a bit of a ticklish job the way the sea was

running, and that lumping wreck sagging under, but the mate knew his trade, and, as the boat rose high on the swell, I leaped and hung on, my feet dangling in the froth. As the sodden hull swung reeling over I clambered up, and dropped to the deck. The missing negro was nowhere in sight. I leaned over, staring down at the bobbing boat being hurled back by the rebound of the surge, yet seeing only the white face of Doris upturned appealingly toward me.

"Pull out, boys; strong, now! Give her plenty of room so she won't suck you down when she drops. I've got to try the cabin."

I got aft that far. I even got fairly within the door, and my ears caught the dull, muffled sounds of blows between decks. My God! the fellow had actually gone back into that icy hold to dig for gold! As I stood there, trembling, wondering if I could dare the passage, I felt a sudden quiver of the deck, heard a sharp, ripping sound forward, a yell of mingled voices, and turned and ran for the rail. With all my strength I flung myself forth — straight out into the gray sea. I went down, down, down, feeling as if the very life was being sucked out of me, every muscle paralyzed by the icy coldness of the water. As I came up, gasping, struggling, scarce able to move a cramped limb, the suction caught me, dragging me back and down again. I battled against it like a madman, every instant an agony; and then, all at once, I found the crest, and breathed in the welcome air, my stiffened limbs moving mechanically, my brain throbbing with pain. I could see nothing until a huge roller flung me upward, buffeting my face with icy spray, and

there, below in the hollow, tossed the long-boat, every pallid face staring up at me. I saw them frantically back water, as the great surge hurled me down headlong. I was beside them; they clutched at me and missed. The stern, swung suddenly about by the blow of the sea, loomed over me, and then my fingers gripped a dripping oar-blade. God knows how I ever clung to it, wrenched by that sea — how the strength remained in my numbed hands; but some one twisted a boathook in the collar of my jacket, and so they hauled me, dripping and half-conscious, over the gunwale. I saw Doris. I looked into her eyes. I felt her bare hands on my wet cheek. I think it was the simple touch of her that gave me back life and comprehension of my condition. I endeavored weakly to lift my head, fighting against the awful numbness that held me prostrate. Everything seemed a dream, yet in that dream I heard De Nova's voice:

"Take him for'ard zare, dam' quick. Strip ze wet clothes off, or he freeze dead. By gar, jump you, Kelly, an' get blanket roun' him!"

I hardly know what they did, for I scarcely retained sufficient life to realize that I was still alive; but, when I was fairly warm beneath a pile of blankets, I saw Doris sitting where she could look down into my face, and the men busy stepping the mast and getting up sail. I pushed my hand out from under the covers and found hers.

"Don't cry, little girl," I whispered tenderly; "it is all right now."

She bent down, her cheek pressed against mine, unable to speak.

"Did — did the *Donna Isabel* go down?" I asked, after a moment's silence.

"Yes, and — and it nearly caught us," her voice sobbing, as the memory of it all came back. "I — I saw you jump, and then there was nothing — nothing but the sea. Oh! how did God ever save you — ever bring you back to me?"

I could only press her hand under the warmth of the blankets, still feeling it difficult to breathe.

"Did — did you see Cole?" she questioned at last, more calmly.

"No, but I heard him; he was down in the lazarette, chopping at the ice, the poor devil."

I felt her shiver; then she lifted her head, looking forth over the sea.

"To the very end the dead are doomed to guard that gold," she said soberly. "I wish we had none of it aboard." I lay watching the delicate profile of her face, happy, yet with a little of foreboding.

"Lift me up a little, dear, until I can look about."

She did so with much gentleness, and I leaned against the gunwale. It was a raw, cloudy morning, sea and sky the same dull, dreary expanse of gray, with nothing anywhere to relieve the awful loneliness of water on which we tossed. Our eyes met and our handclasp tightened.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN WHICH WE FIGHT DEATH

I REMEMBER distinctly enough the first six days of that boat voyage; it seems as if every detail was burned upon my brain with fire. I see the faces of the men constantly becoming more haggard and hopeless as they stared, dull-eyed and aimlessly, out over the endless waste of water to the dun sky. We were so tired of it; it had grown so hateful in its pitiless vacancy, its dull, dreary void. The very waves mocked us, the foam-flaked crests chasing each other in maddening sameness, the flying clouds above assuming the form of grotesque phantoms, leering and dancing like incarnate fiends. It seemed to me that with every recurring dawn those within the boat appeared older, grayer, more deeply lined; their exposed flesh caked more heavily with the salt spray; their limbs cramped from confinement and cold; their eyes lustreless and heavy with despair. They conversed with some effort at cheerfulness at first, figuring on the speed with which we sailed, dividing up the treasure, counting the gold pieces, and speculating upon their probable value. But depression followed swiftly as day merged into day, with only that same desert of tumbling waters stretching about us, that same wild sky overhead. Finally the growling voices ceased entirely, the

fellows becoming moody and sullen, scarcely answering even when addressed.

If anything the women managed to bear up better than the men, but whether this was because of their dispositions, or failure to comprehend fully the desperation of our situation, I am unable to say. Yet outwardly they seemed to retain their courage longer. However, their eyes told me plainly enough how heavily the hours rested upon them. I saw comparatively little of Celeste, as she chose a position near the foot of the mast, and remained there much of the time, wrapped warmly in blankets, ministered to by De Nova, who sat beside her. But Doris remained aft with me, resting when I was off duty, but sitting wide awake, her head touching my knee whenever it was my trick at the tiller. It seems a strange thing to say, yet I believe it was the very certainty of death which kept her strong, self-reliant, almost happy. Not for one instant did she consider our final rescue as possible. She lived in her love for me, utterly insensible to the drear surroundings, and merely anxious to prolong our life together. It was a revelation to me of a woman's heart, a woman's constancy. May I never forget the clasp of her hand, the tender lovelight in her gray eyes, the words of faith and hope on her lips, as we sat thus through those long hours battling against the sea, the motionless forms of the blanketed sleepers alone evidencing other human life within the boat. It was her presence, her love, her inspiration, which stiffened me to the continued performance of a labor growing harder with each day.

It became easy to see what this meant to us all. It

was neither hunger nor thirst, although I felt it safer to put all upon short rations from the beginning, but rather the awful, continuous strain of hopeless loneliness in that vast desert of ocean. The contemplation of it maddened us one moment into frenzy, and depressed us the next into profound melancholy. We could not shake it off; awake or in dreams it held us to slavery. Everywhere, everywhere the same eternal swell of the seas, the same eternity of clouded sky, the same dull, dead monotony of scene and motion, hour after hour, day after night. It drove us mad, crushing down upon the brain as though it was a real weight, merciless, agonizing. The air remained frosty, the southwest wind chilling, the spray which slapped into our faces icy cold. Our fingers stiffened with cold, our bodies shook from the chill; only beneath the warmth of the blankets could we find comparative comfort. Hour after hour the men lay, curled up and motionless, only crawling forth reluctantly to take their turn on watch. The sea was everything except smooth, yet the long-boat rode the heavy swell splendidly, dipping down into the roaring hollows and soaring up to the foaming crests with all the swift buoyancy of a bird, the weight of the wind driving us steadily forward, and affording little occasion for any change in canvas. Our greatest effort was to keep the straining cordage free from ice, and to prevent its formation along the gunwale or at the bows, over which spray dashed in constant shower.

Good God, how those hours dragged, with the same heartless scene without, the same hopeless faces within! Most of us continued to live merely because we could

not die. Indifference took the place of hope, and we performed our simple tasks automatically, almost unconsciously. Johnson, De Nova, and I took our tricks at the helm, with one man always awake forward to manage the running gear, and only once during those first six days were we compelled to lower our sail, or take a reef in the jib.

Then a fierce squall came tearing down upon us from out the northwest, a swift, sharp blow, heralded by a blinding snow flurry which kicked up an ugly sea, lashing us with heavier stinging spray, and coating everything with ice. For seven hours we fought in a blinding smother, every man awake, crouching beneath blankets, the women stowed away under the thwarts, and De Nova and I at the tiller, the huge surges pounding against our backs, as we thus kept them from sweeping the laboring boat fore and aft, and swamping her. I never believed we could weather it, the increasing waves tossing us about like a cork, yet, as the dawn broke, we succeeded in broaching to, with a canvas drag holding her, and the very moment I realized she would ride safely I fell forward dead asleep. Either Doris or one of the men covered me with blankets, my icy clothing drying on my body. But it was Doris who welcomed me back to life again, as a little glimpse of westering sun grew barely visible through a rift in the dun clouds, with the mainsail again spread, and the long-boat leaping to the foaming summits. Oh, but it was worth all suffering just to read the confession of her eyes, and to feel her bend down over me in sudden tenderness! I am not ashamed that the tears dimmed my eyes so I could scarcely see her dear face or

that my voice choked so I could do no more than whisper her name. She must have understood, for her soft hands touched my cheek, and so we rested for a long while, scarcely exchanging a word between us.

It was later that same day, just at the edge of twilight, when Kelly called, "A sail!" pointing eagerly out over the port quarter. Then, some upon our knees, some standing, we all saw it, a misty, white reflection, showing vague against the darkening horizon. I know not what it really was — a gleam of canvas, a speck of cloud, or the pinnacle of an iceberg, — but as we swept toward it, the night dropped down over the waters blotting the last faint vestige from view. Yet we hung on desperately, the men staring out into the black void, grumbling and cursing, until the long night wore away with no reward.

That was about the last I recall clearly; afterwards all grew indistinct, commingled, confused. It was like a dream rather than reality. I performed my work as before, the instincts of a seaman leading me rightly, and out of the mist numerous incidents arise to memory proving that I observed and thought. Never can I forget the sight of that narrow boat, tossing about on the crests of great seas, or plunging down into the black hollows; the green water pouring in cataracts over the gunwale; the constant bailing; the wet, soggy blankets; the moaning of wind through the icy cordage; the flapping of the sail; the gray masses of water curling over us in continuous threatening; the awful expanse of ocean revealed by daylight; the black loneliness through which we swept at night. We ceased to talk, to think, even, growing more and more sullen, moody, dull-eyed, cramped of limb and

benumbed of brain. We sat silently staring into the smother, forever beholding the mirages of disordered minds. Men would spring to their feet, yelling out some discovery, only to sink back again, with ghastly faces buried in their hands. It was all illusion; the waves, the clouds mocking us, even our voices sounding unnatural, our faces growing unfamiliar.

Only Doris; Doris did not change — not, at least, to my eyes. Ay, she became whiter, weaker, the shadows growing darker beneath her eyes, yet she still sat at my knee, looking up into my face, yielding me new courage out of her heart of hearts. God knows I believe she saved me, saved me from going mad, saved me with the power of her love — held me sane, held me steadfast, when the very soul in me had given way. I think of those other faces now with a shudder. It seems as if all that was human had gone out of us; we were no longer men, only things. We crawled about. We growled rather than used articulate speech; bruised by the constant buffeting of the sea, sore with the smart of salt water, chilled through by the icy wind, we snarled like wild beasts, our eyes bloodshot, our faces haggard and unclean.

I know not how long it endured. I lost all track of day and night. I merely remember this and that out of the mist, Doris's gray eyes ever upon me, her hand clasping mine; Celeste lying motionless day after day under the blankets; De Nova rocking back and forth, striving to sing, or creeping aft to the tiller, with his body shaking as though he had a palsy; Johnson, never moving, his head sunk into his chest, his gaze out over the

bows; McKnight curled up as a dog lies, sometimes cursing fiercely, only to break off and cry like a child. I remember when the boom swung about, pitching Sanchez headlong and breaking his leg; how we pulled it back into position with a sickening snap, binding it there firmly, while beads of perspiration told the Chilean's pain. I recall that other day when Dade suddenly stood up, his eyes staring dully out into the fog-bank which wrapped us about, extended his hands, smiling, and said, "Sure, I'm comin', ol' pal," and stepped overboard. We grabbed for him, but he went down and never came up again. McKnight was the first to speak.

"He had his pockets full o' gold. I saw him takin' it las' night."

There was a fierce storm of oaths, the faces of the men wolfish and savage as they glared down into the water; but Kelly fell on his knees and began to pray.

It almost seems to me that this was the last, though it could not have been. There were hours after that, perhaps even days and nights, when I lived without really knowing that I lived. It was a period of fancies, phantoms, dreams, weird and fantastic, haunting horrors that left all reality blank. I know that Johnson helped me at the tiller while De Nova lay prone in the bottom of the boat, sometimes talking to himself, occasionally lifting his head to peer over the side. What he said had no meaning, just a jumble of French words, and he smiled like that dead Spaniard in the cabin of the *Donna Isabel*. I know that Sanchez, who had bravely done all he could in spite of his broken leg, fell into the delirium of fever, screamed for hours that he was dying, and had

at last to be bound fast in his blankets. I know Kelly came creeping aft with a knife in his hand, imagining he had been robbed, and I had to knock him flat with the tiller-bar, the boat falling off into the trough of the sea and nearly capsizing before I could get her head about again. Doris was bending over Sanchez, who seemed to have an interval of sanity at the moment — that was the last I remember; then, I think, I pitched over against Doris when she came back to me, and everything went dark.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN WHICH WE COME TO THE END

I WAS lying between white sheets in a rather wide berth when I came again to consciousness, a yellow glow of sunlight streaming in through an open port, and the clanking sound of machinery in my ears. I closed my eyes again wearily, my head reeling yet from the delusions of the past. No, this was *real*—a steamer, rising and falling on the swell, but pushing steadily forward to the rapid revolutions of the screw. I could hear the tramping of feet on deck, even the slush of the sea without. I opened my eyes again, watching a curtain wave to the fresh air rushing in through the port, and then I turned my head on the pillow. Doris sat on a low stool gazing out through the aperture on the sea, her face partially turned away. She looked pale, careworn, her eyes heavy and sad. Suddenly she turned her glance in my direction, and sprang up with a glad cry.

"Oh, Jack, you have been lying there so long unconscious!"

I could only clasp her hands and gaze into the depths of her gray eyes.

"I have proved rather a poor specimen of a man, I fear, dear," I confessed at last, ashamed of my weakness. "How long?"

"It is three days since we were brought on board, and we were a day and night in the boat after you lost consciousness."

I endeavored to think it out, to comprehend. She leaned farther over, her lips touching my cheek.

"Don't worry about it, Jack; everything is all right now. Johnson took your place at the tiller, and — and we were picked up."

"What vessel is this?"

"The *El Cid*, Valparaiso to Buenos Ayres — a coast-trader."

"And the others? Do they live?"

"All but Sanchez; he died the night after our rescue. Kelly is half crazed yet, but they think he will get over it. De Nova was very badly frozen, but Celeste was out on deck yesterday."

I lay there looking at her, striving valiantly to put all these horrors away, and to face the present and the future. My handclasp tightened, for I could no longer keep back the one question which trembled on my lips.

"But you, Doris, you! Do you still mean what you said yonder? Are we only saved to lose each other? Have you heard? Do you know anything of him?"

The red blood flooded the pale cheeks, the long lashes veiling the gray eyes.

"Oh, not now; don't speak of that now."

"But I must, I cannot wait in suspense," I insisted, lifting myself on the pillow. "You have heard — tell me."

"I — I have been a coward," she faltered. "I — I have not asked; I have not even told my name to those

on board. I was afraid the knowledge might place all under arrest; besides I — I wanted to nurse you."

I looked at her, my heart failing, my voice trembling as I spoke.

"But — but are you going to — England?"

"Yes."

"When?"

There was a long pause, in which I heard her rapid breathing.

"They — they tell me I can get passage on an English vessel, the *Albatross*, within a few days after we reach Buenos Ayres."

Her hand tightened on mine, and she dropped to her knees, her face buried in the coverlet.

I fought the devil in me like a man, my hands clenched, my teeth set fiercely, but it was a while before I could control my voice sufficiently for reply. She did not lift her head, and as I continued to gaze at her my heart throbbed with a love which became sacrifice.

"Doris," I managed to whisper at last, "whatever you believe to be right I will think right also. Only let me be alone for a little while — just a little while, until I can fight this out and conquer."

She lifted her head, her hand on my hair, her gray eyes looking frankly into mine.

"I — I thank you, Jack," she smiled tremblingly. The next moment I was alone.

While I was sitting up and partially dressed that evening, Marsden the chief mate came in, and told me briefly the story of our rescue.

"We were considerably to the west of our course," he said gravely, "because we had met headwinds and a heavy sea all the way down the coast. It was just at daybreak when we sighted your boat in longitude seventy-eight degrees west, and latitude fifty-three degrees, seventeen minutes, south. I 've been knocking about at sea for twenty years, Mr. Stephens, but I never saw a more pitiful sight than that long-boat presented when we got up alongside. The jib held, but the mainsail was in tatters, and for a minute or two I did n't think there was a living soul aboard. There was a man forward lashed down with ropes, dead; a man and a woman were wrapped up in blankets amidships, leaning against each other, their eyes closed. Close up to the stern another woman was lying with her arms about your neck, and hiding your face."

"Doris, with her arms about me!" I thought. How well I knew the desperation that could lead her to the embrace she had ever refused me! Marsden went on:

"A big fellow held to the tiller as if he was froze there, but he 'd dropped down until his head hung dangling as the boat rocked. There was n't one of them took any notice of us until we were fairly alongside. Then this big sailor lifted his head and stared dull-eyed like he thought he saw a vision, and when I spoke to him the woman that had her arms about you staggered to her knees and began to cry. Good Lord, sir, but it made my heart ache, and I never saw so much misery in any human face before. Well, we fell to, and got you all on the *El Cid*, hoisted the whole outfit over the rail, and, barring the dead man, I reckon you 're all good for a spell of life yet."

"They told you our story?"

"Yes, — most of it anyway; and I understand all right what it was did you up so. It was n't hunger or cold, but just the loneliness an' strain."

I looked away from him, out through the open port at the gray vista of sea.

"That was it, Mr. Marsden," I said, my voice shaking to the memory of it. "It was the hell of the great ocean — it broke our hearts."

As the *El Cid* sped on her way up the Patagonian coast, my strength came rapidly back, and I soon found my way on deck, where, wrapped against the chill of the wind, I passed much time talking with Doris, seeing De Nova and Kelly now and then. Celeste was often with us, her eyes roguish as ever, but her face thin and white. Once, when we chanced to be left alone together, I undertook to question the girl.

"What is the matter between you and De Nova, Celeste? Have you two fallen out?"

She tossed her head, flashing her eyes at me.

"I not know we ever fall in," she said, pouting prettily. "He ver' nice for a sailor, but w'y do I want a sailor? I want ze sea no more ever."

"Yes, but De Nova can quit the sea."

"*Non, non!*" she cried, shaking her head roguishly, "I have a very good time wiz Monsieur De Nova; he talk nice, he make love nice — but it is all over now."

"You mean you are going back to Europe?"

She shrugged her shoulders, her teeth gleaming.

"*Oui*, monsieur; I go wiz Madame to London, to Paree; zare I have *plaisir*."

"But De Nova? How does he take it?"

"Pah! he get over it; I know ze sailor. See, monsieur; w'at I tell you?"

I glanced aft in the direction she pointed. Within the companion stood the debonair mate, his little black moustaches curled jauntily upward, his teeth merrily glistening, as he smiled down upon a rosy-cheeked damsel, whom I recognized as the stewardess. My companion patted her little foot on the deck.

"Pah! did I not tell you, monsieur? I know ze sailor."

She swept away with the swift movement of a bird, and I turned my face about to perceive Marsden standing silently beside me. He drew up a deck-chair and sat down at my side. His grave face and manner led me to speak first.

"I have been wondering," I said slowly, "whether you intend to report us as soon as you make land. No doubt you heard the story of the *Sea Queen* at Valparaiso, and have already guessed us to be the survivors of the crew of that yacht."

"Why, yes," stroking his beard; "we have no doubt as to that. We know little of the affair of the *Sea Queen* beyond what your man Kelly has told us, as we were up the North coast at the time. However, I do not think there will be anything gained by reporting your rescue immediately, for no one can care particularly about your arrest except possibly a British officer or such. The Chileans are still busy with their war, and the man who owned the yacht being dead —"

"You — you — mean Lord Darlington?"

"Yes; that is what I came here to tell you about. I have been waiting until you were strong enough to hear the story. I thought you were the one who ought to tell her." He paused doubtfully. "I understand she is Lady Darlington?"

"Yes," I answered, my voice trembling in my eagerness to comprehend fully. "But are you sure her husband is dead?"

"Regarding that fact there is no possible doubt, Mr. Stephens. We were in port at Valparaiso barely three hours, but long enough to hear a brief account of the affair. It seems Lord Darlington had in some way quarrelled with or insulted a Chilean naval officer. This officer being on duty in the grounds of the *Presidente* the night of the declaration of war, the two met again and renewed their quarrel. The officer was drunk and abusive, and his lordship drew a revolver. They were separated at that time by the guard, but an hour later the Englishman was found beside the fountain of the inner court dead from a knife-thrust in his back. His murderer disappeared instantly and most mysteriously."

"My God!" I exclaimed, dazed with the information. "It must have been Sanchez!"

"It must have been Sanchez," Marsden repeated soberly. "He was fleeing from the crime when he ran into your party. It was his own haunting conscience that put the idea of the ghosts Kelly tells about into his head. You will tell her the story?"

"Yes," I said, not venturing to look into his face, realizing that he understood.

IN WHICH WE COME TO THE END

I sat there, it seemed for hours, endeavoring to muster up courage for my task as I watched, far in the distance, the darkening outlines of Cape Flores. At last I went slowly down the companionway into the cabin. Slowly and falteringly at first, but gaining control of my voice as I proceeded, I told her all, marking the pallor of her cheek, the horror in her eyes. For another age I sat silent, gazing across the deserted cabin out through an open port, afraid to disturb the motionless woman beside me. Finally my fingers, almost unconsciously, crept across the rail of the settee until they touched her own.

"Doris," I whispered pleadingly, confused by her silence, "is it possible that you already knew this?"

She did not raise her bowed head, but I felt the soft pressure of her hand.

"Yes, Jack, I — I knew," she acknowledged doubtfully. "Sanchez told me in the boat when he felt himself to be dying. It was then I came back and took you in my arms. But I could n't tell you — I could not tell you. I felt that if we were saved you must learn it from other lips than mine."

"But now we both know."

She lifted her eyes suddenly, eyes misty with tears, and I realized the truth forever.

THE END

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